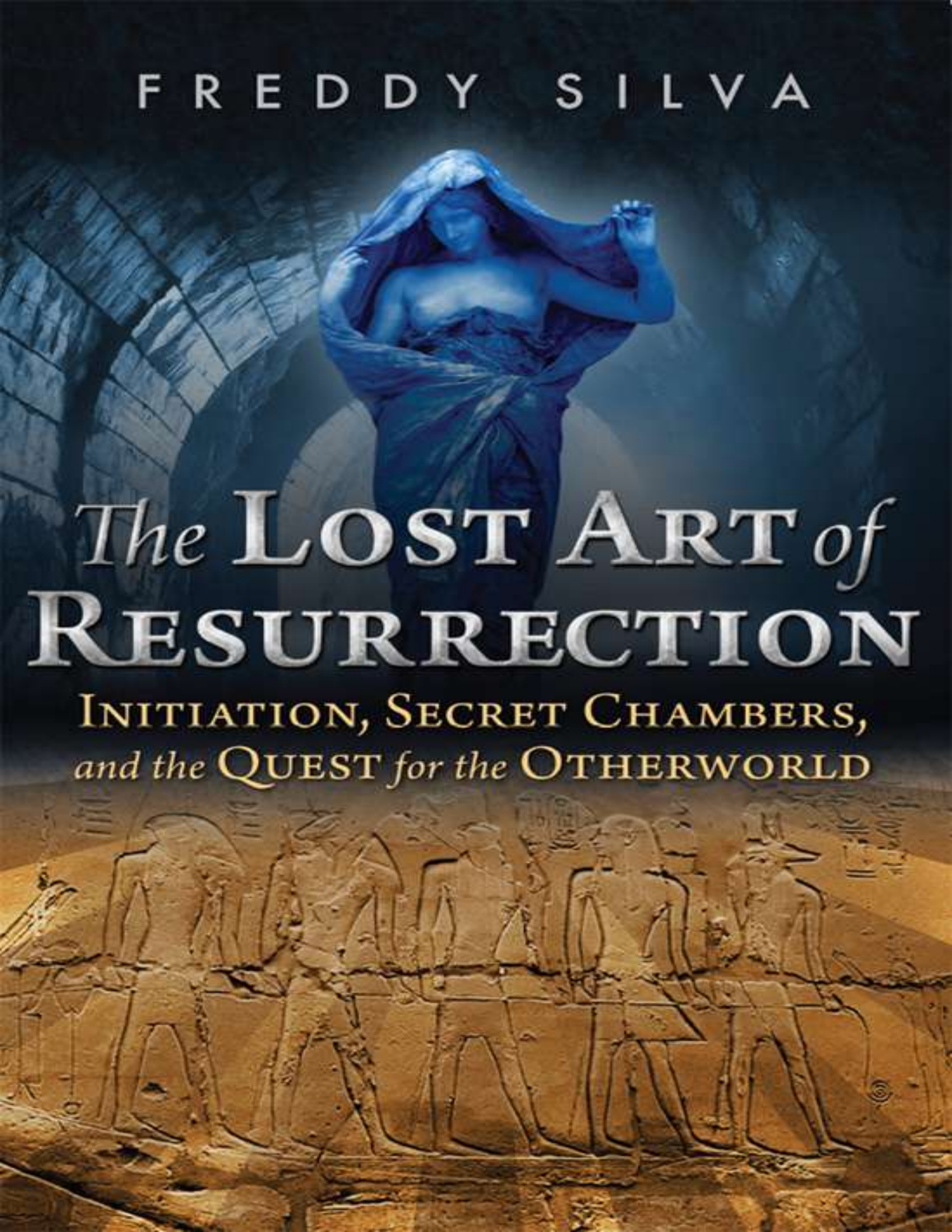
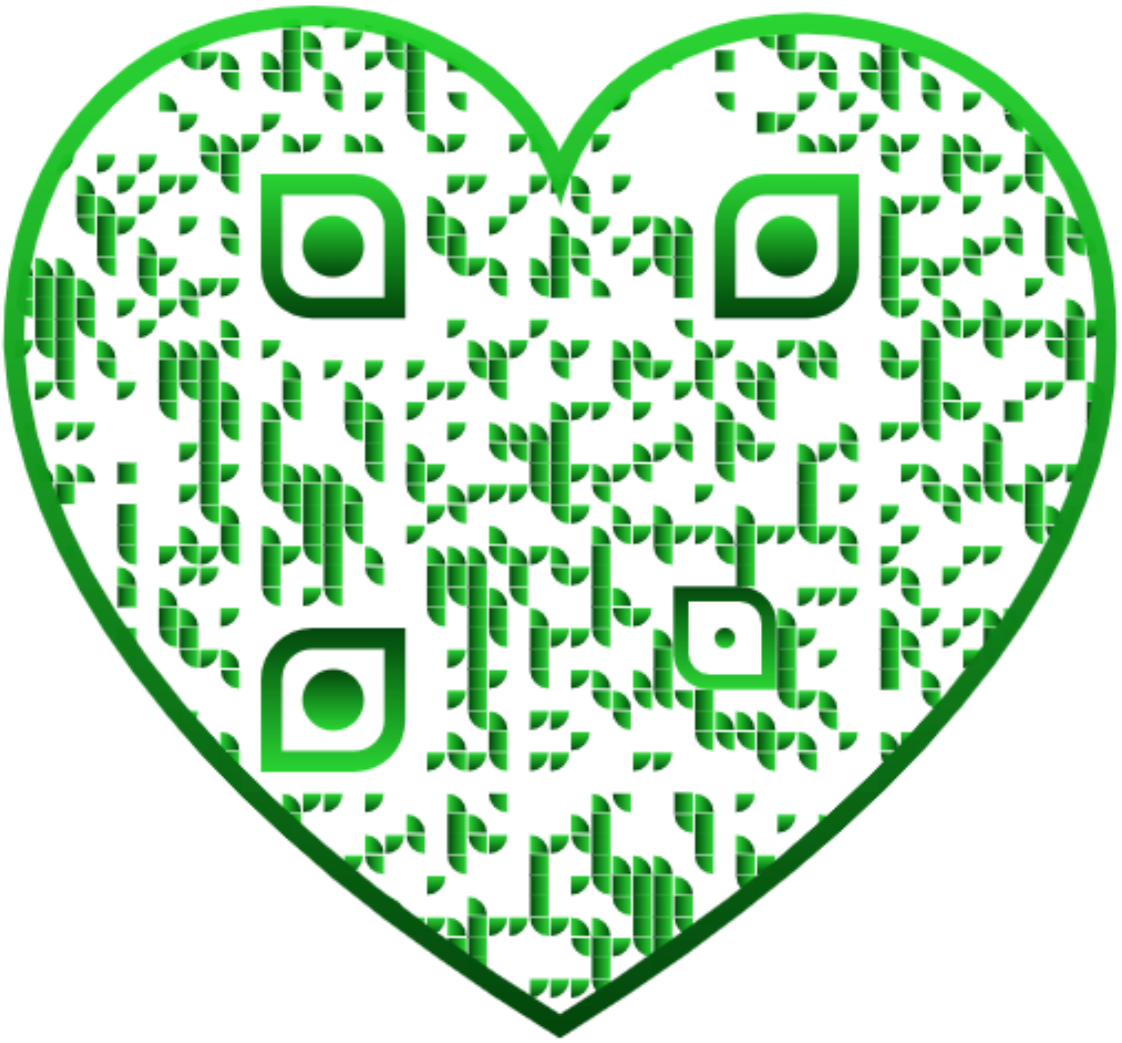
FREDDY SILVA



The Lost Art of Resurrection

Initiation, Secret Chambers, and the Quest for the Otherworld



The LOST ART *of* RESURRECTION

INITIATION, SECRET CHAMBERS, *and the* QUEST *for the* OTHERWORLD

FREDDY SILVA

Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada

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a Scottish faery tale . . .

There once dwelt in Nithsdale a woman who was enabled by faery aid to see the spirits of the dead in the Otherworld. This was how it came about.

One day she sat spinning wool in her house. Her baby lay in a cradle beside her, listening to the soft humming sound of the spinning wheel and her mother's sweet song. Suddenly a rustling, like the rustling of dead leaves in the wind, was heard at the door. The woman looked up and saw a beautiful lady, clad in green and carrying a baby. She entered and, smiling sweetly, spoke and said, "Will you nurse my bonnie baby until I return?"

The woman answered, "Yes, I shall do that." She took the baby in her arms, and the lady went away, promising to return. But the day went past and night came on, and still she did not come back for her child. The woman wondered greatly, but she wondered even more the next morning when she awoke to find beside her bed beautiful new clothes for her children, and some delicious cakes. Being very poor she was glad to dress her children in the new clothes, and to find that they fitted well. The cakes were of wheaten bread and had a honey flavour. It was a great delight to the children to eat them.

The lady did not return that day or the next day. Weeks went past, and the woman nursed the strange child. Months went past, and still the lady stayed away. On many a morning wheaten cakes with honey flavour were found in the house, and when the children's clothes were nearly worn out, new clothing was provided for them as mysteriously as before.

Summer came on, and one evening the lady, clad in green, again entered the house. A child who was playing on the floor stretched forth her hands to grasp the shining silver spangles that adorned her gown, but to her surprise, her hands passed through them as if they were sunbeams. The woman perceived this and knew that her visitor was a faery.

Said the faery lady, "You have been kind to my bonnie baby; I will now take her away."

The woman was sorry to part with the child, and said, “You have a right to her, but I love her dearly.”

Said the faery, “Come with me, and I shall show you my house.”

The woman went outside with the faery. They walked through a wood together, and then began to climb a green hill on the sunny side. When they were half-way to the top, the faery said something that the woman did not understand. No sooner had she spoken than the turf on a bank in front of them lifted up and revealed a door. This door opened, and the two entered through the doorway. When they did so, the turf came down and the door was shut. The woman found herself in a bare chamber which was dimly lighted. “Now you shall see my home,” said the faery woman, who took from her waistbelt a goblet containing a green liquid. She dropped three drops of this liquid in the woman’s left eye, and said, “Look now.”

The woman looked, and was filled with wonder. A beautiful country stretched out in front of her. There were green hills fringed by trees, crystal streams flashing in sunshine, and a lake that shone like burnished silver. Between the hills there lay a field of ripe barley. The faery then dropped three drops of the green liquid in the woman’s right eye, and said, “Look now.”

The woman looked, and she saw men and women she had known in times past, cutting the barley and gathering fruit from the trees. She cried out, “I see many who once lived on Earth and have long been dead. What are they doing here?”

Said the faery, “These people are suffering punishment for their evil deeds.”

When she had spoken thus, the faery woman passed her hand over the woman’s eyes, and the vision of green hills and harvest fields and reapers vanished at once. She found herself standing once more in the bare, dimly lighted chamber. Then the faery gave her gifts of cloth and healing ointments, and, leading her to the door, bade her farewell. The door opened, the turf was lifted up, and the woman left the faery’s dwelling and returned to her own home. For a time she kept the power of seeing the fairies as they went to and fro near her house. But one day she spoke to one of them, and the faery asked, “With which eye do you see me?” Said the woman, “I see you with both my eyes.”

The faery breathed on her eyes, and then was lost to sight. Never again did the woman behold the fairies, for the power that had been given her was taken away from her eyes by this faery to whom she had spoken.[1]

1

A Noble Tradition Recently Suppressed

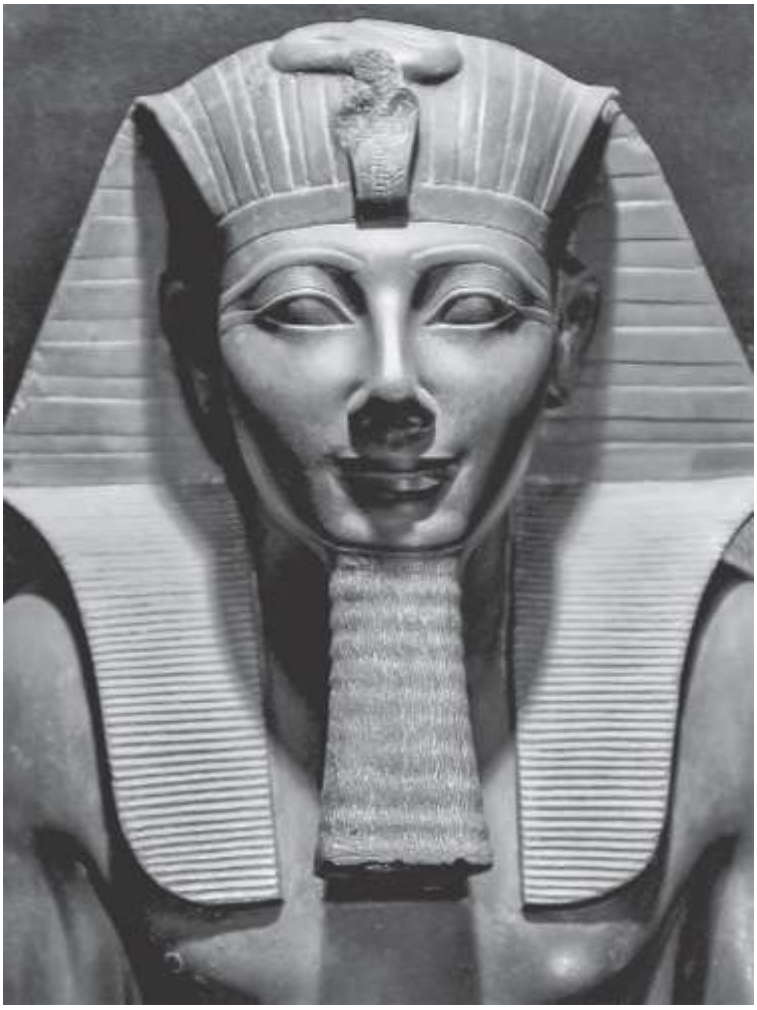
The text is called Treatise of the Hidden Chamber. Its contents line the walls of a meandering subterranean passage tomb from 1470 BC attributed to the Egyptian pharaoh Thutmosis III.

The text is a faithful copy from an original account compiled a thousand years earlier and provides instruction on how to proceed into the Otherworld, a place as real to the Egyptians as the physical world. However, unlike the physical world, which is governed by time and decay, this parallel place exists outside of time; it is present and eternal and simultaneous with the physical, like two serpents entwined around a pole. The Egyptians called it Amdwat.

The Amdwat interpenetrates the world of the living. It is the place from where all physical forms manifest and to where they return. It is an integral component of birth, death, and rebirth. Only through a direct experience of the Amdwat can a person fully grasp the operative forces of nature, the knowledge of which was said to transform an individual into an *akh*—a being radiant with 'inner spiritual illumination.'

All these instructions neatly cover the walls and passages and chambers of Thutmosis's resting place. There's just one problem—the text explicitly states how the experience is useful for a person who is *alive:* "It is good for the dead to have this knowledge, but also for the person on Earth. . . . Whoever understands these mysterious images is a well-provided

light being. Always this person can enter and leave the Otherworld. Always speaking to the living ones. Proven to be true a million times."[1]



Thutmosis III.

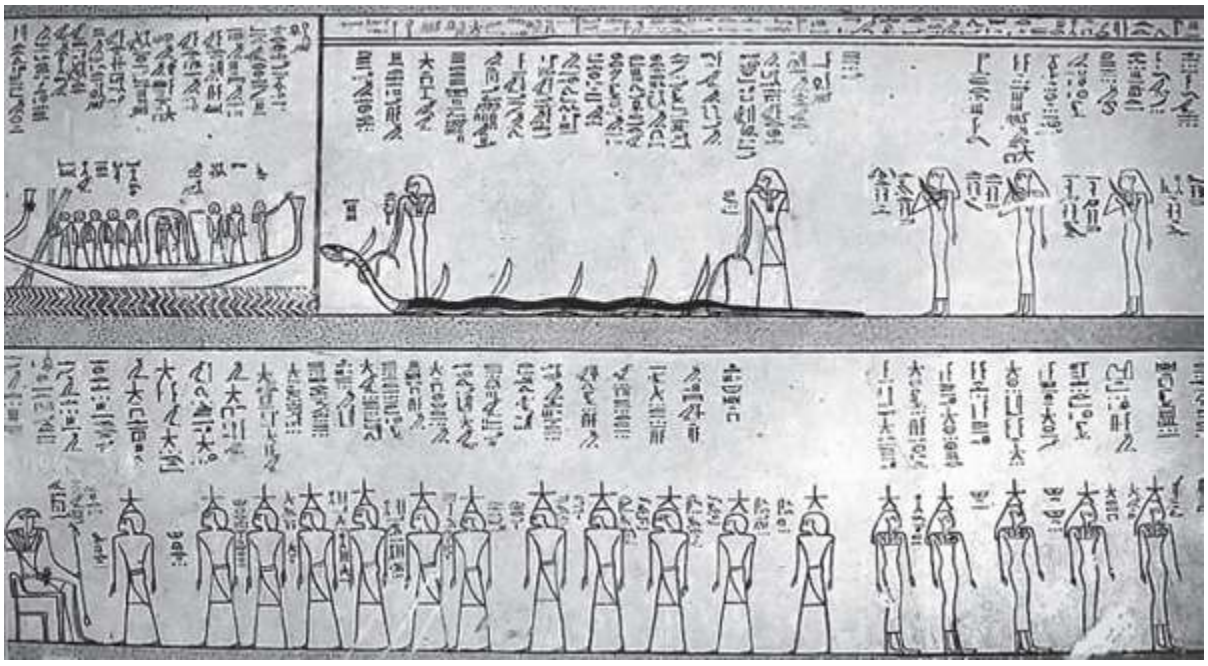
Then there's the tomb itself, an unusual one, to say the least:

- It comes complete with a well, a redundant feature for a dead person.
- Its central feature is an oval sarcophagus of superlative craftsmanship, and yet Thutmosis's mummy was found in the temple of Hatshepsut, where the pharaoh had earlier built himself a mortuary temple.
- The main chamber is aligned to the northeast, the direction associated with enlightenment and wisdom in esoteric philosophy.

- The complete text of the Amdwat is the first one of its kind in the Valley of the Kings, and yet despite the pharaoh's extraordinary accomplishments, it was painted onto the limestone plaster in a simplistic style uncharacteristic for a ruler of his magnitude.

Very odd indeed.

To understand ancient Egyptians you have to think like ancient Egyptians. These people held an unshakable belief that everything that exists in the physical plane is a mirror of processes already taking place in the metaphysical. As above, so below. Consequently, much of their writings carries two meanings: one literal, the other allegorical or metaphorical. But when Victorian archaeologists saw inscriptions covering the walls of a pharaoh's resting place they interpreted them as serving a literal funerary purpose because, from their point of view, these subterranean chambers were taken for what they were: repositories for dead people, despite repeated absences of evidence of burial, or instances of the mummies being found elsewhere—as in the case of Thutmosis III.



A portion of Treatise of the Hidden Chamber.

To the Egyptians, however, a tomb was considered a place of rest but not necessarily a pharaoh's *final* resting place. And in much the same manner, experiencing the Otherworld did not require a person to be dead. Rather, evidence shows that after undergoing a secret rite of initiation, the candidate was roused from a womblike experience and proclaimed "raised from the dead."

This was the concept behind living resurrection, and it wasn't limited to Egyptian belief. It was understood by Mysteries schools, esoteric sects, and shamanist societies the world over, from China to Arizona. Gnostics of the early Greek era describe this sacred ritual as an experience that disclosed to its practitioners insights into the nature of reality. The author of a Gnostic gospel titled the *Treatise on Resurrection,* written in the early second century, categorically states, "Do not suppose that resurrection is a figment of the imagination. It is not a fantasy; rather, it is something real. Instead, one ought to maintain that the world is an illusion, rather than resurrection."[2] The anonymous author goes on to explain that to live a human existence ordinarily is to live a spiritual death, but the moment a person experiences living resurrection is the moment they discover enlightenment. "It is . . . the revealing of what truly exists . . . and a transition into newness,"[3] and anyone exposed to this while still living became spiritually awakened.

Such a concept is at odds with the manner in which resurrection has come to be portrayed, particularly after the rise of Catholicism. In fact, a text from the same codex, the Gospel of Philip, goes so far as to ridicule ignorant Christians who literally believe that a physical body can be resurrected after dying.[4]

So, how did people experience living resurrection? Why did so many choose to put themselves through its rigorous ritual? What did they hope to gain in daily life by rising from the dead? And why was this philosophy banned and its adherents murdered by the millions by prevailing religious forces?

2

The Myth of Resurrection

Much of our current understanding of the true meaning of resurrection is shrouded in blissful ignorance or superstition. But we ought not be hard on ourselves, for superstition is what remains after the original understanding of a concept has been lost over time. And as concepts go, 'living resurrection' has been around far longer than we presently imagine.

Once upon a time it was regarded as a sacred ritual whose traditions were zealously guarded by adepts of the highest moral integrity. Admission into its inner practices was a privilege attained by few, and those few regarded the experience as the pinnacle of their spiritual development. Then, around two thousand years ago, the story became distorted and obscured. So, where and how did it take a wrong turn?

In the first century a new religion was brought to Rome, with a man named Yeshua ben Yosef occupying the leading role of resurrected hero. But the story did not fare well with a populace long accustomed to raising its heroes and rulers on pedestals and deifying them. Nor did it wash with the Gnostics of Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt who, up until that point, considered this man Jesus to have been a mere mortal; they equally believed he'd never been crucified much less reincarnated from a physical death. The chief proponents of such 'heretical' views were Bishop Marcion of Sinope, Valentinus of Alexandria, and another scholar from that same enlightened city, Basilides, who wrote twenty-four commentaries on the Gospels and claimed that the crucifixion was a fraud—that a substitute named Simon of Cyrene took Jesus's place. Manuscripts possibly written within a century after Jesus's time, and rediscovered near the Nile at Nag

Hammadi in 1945, claim as much. One of them—Second Treatise of the Great Seth—is particularly damning because it actually quotes Jesus in the first person describing the crucifixion: "I did not die in reality but in appearance, lest I be put to shame by them. . . . For my death which they think happened, happened to them in their error and blindness, since they nailed their man unto the death. . . . It was another, their father, who drank the gall and the vinegar; it was not I . . . it was another, Simon, who bore the cross on his shoulder. It was another upon whom they placed the crown of thorns. . . . And I was laughing at their ignorance."[1]

Even as late as the seventh century the Qur'an upheld the same argument:

> And their false allegation that they slew the Messiah, Isa, the son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah, when in fact they never killed him nor did they crucify him but they thought they did. And those who disputed his fate were themselves in a state of uncertainty as to the truth and reality of the incident; their belief was based on empty knowledge and their supposition was formed on grounds admittedly insufficient, for indeed they just did not slay him but the guilt nevertheless resided in the intention.[2]

Most damning of all is the debauched Pope Leo X's admitting that the story of Jesus was a myth, in what must rank as one of history's biggest gaffes: "All ages can testifie enough how profitable that fable of Christ hath ben to us and our companie."[3]

Nevertheless a literal view of the crucifixion and resurrection was subsequently leveraged by the Roman Catholic Church, whose authority relied on the experience of Jesus's miraculous regeneration after death by a small, closed group of apostles, and the position of incontestable authority the event supposedly bestowed upon them. Since Peter the apostle was the first male witness, and the pope came to derive his authority from Peter—based on Peter having been declared first bishop of Rome, despite a total absence of evidence[4]—naturally it was in the best interests of the church to promote a literal spin on the subject of resurrection. The position was no doubt helped by the apostle Paul's misunderstanding of Jesus making dead

people return to life, not to mention his lack of understanding of the ritual of living resurrection that was secretly performed by the Jerusalem Church. Remember, the Jerusalem Church was governed by Jesus's brother James the Just, a man who would have been privy to the secret teachings, whereas Paul never even knew Jesus. The First Epistle to the Corinthians nearly lets the cat out of the bag when it notes that Paul was "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified."[5] In other words, that Paul sought to deny the existence of earlier myths of risen god-men already established throughout the ancient world. Paul then dug himself into a deeper hole by professing that spiritual knowledge is a vanity created by the devil—hardly the position taken by a man with a true understanding of spiritual doctrine.[6]

Thus the population of Europe was brainwashed into accepting the resurrection as a literal miracle experienced solely by Yeshua ben Yosef after being nailed to a cross, physically dying, and rising three days later, contrary to the laws of nature, even contrary to Jesus's personal views!

This turn of events did not occur overnight. For the new cult of Jesus the God to supplant the old gods, he needed to be deified and made acceptable to people of the Roman world and beyond, he had to be seen to possess similar supernatural powers. And so, like the rejuvenating gods of the Egyptians, Persians, Phoenicians, and Greeks—Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, Zeus, Osiris—Jesus too was made to cross into the Otherworld and reemerge triumphantly as a resurrected god.

Even if the political machinations behind this story are removed there still remains the fundamental misunderstanding of 'raising the dead.' For one thing, Gnostic cults claimed such a term was never meant to be taken literally. To ancient holy orders it was a figurative description of a ritual only revealed to initiates of the esoteric arts. And whereas Catholic dogma maintained that survival of the soul is only possible upon physical death (or following the end of the world) everyone else shared the common understanding that resurrection was to be achieved while still living, a point unequivocally stressed by the suppressed Gospel of Philip: "Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing."[7] In other words, those who believe in a literal interpretation of resurrection are

confusing a spiritual truth with an actual event; Philip himself even goes on to describe fundamental Christianity as "the faith of fools."

Divine Virgin Semiramis with baby Thammuz.

The Gnostics of that period had a better grasp of the Mysteries than orthodox religious orders. The knowledge they had acquired in secret over centuries concerned an inner experience of God. They could claim the experience, and therefore, an authority that surpassed that of the apostles and their successors. This posed a great danger to the authority of the church, a concern voiced by Irenaeus, the father of Catholic theology: "No one can be compared with them in the greatness of their gnosis, not even if you mention Peter or Paul or any of the other apostles . . . they themselves have discovered more than the apostle."[8]

This would have been Iranaeus's mere opinion had the Apocalypse of Peter—another gospel from Nag Hammadi—also not come to light to undermine the church's position. In this account the 'risen' Jesus explains to Peter, "Those who name themselves bishop or deacon and act as if they had received their authority from God are in reality waterless canals. Although they do not understand the Mystery they boast that the Mystery of truth belongs to them alone. They have misinterpreted that apostle's teaching and have set up an imitation church in place of the true Christian brotherhood."

So here we have the fundamental problem: the Gnostics offered every initiate a direct experience of God via a ritual of living resurrection, whereas the church claimed resurrection of the soul could be achieved only if channeled through its offices. And from this point on, the secret tradition practiced by Gnostic and other esoteric orders was labeled as heretical for purely political reasons.

Yet the concept of living resurrection survived among Gnostic Christians and Greek traditions, just as it had once been actively practiced by sects such as the Sabeans, Mandeans, Manichaeans, Nazoreans, and particularly, the Essene community of Jerusalem, who wrote about it on scrolls made of copper, which they deliberately concealed in caves at Qumran shortly before the Romans sacked their temple. Thanks to two curious goat herders, these writings were discovered in 1947.

The Copper Scroll describes how immersion in the secrets of the Mysteries led to a final ritual of raising the dead conducted in secret chambers beneath Temple Mount. Indeed one of the most important buildings described in the inner temple court is the House of Tribute, whose entrance was still known in the first century BC as the Gate of Offering. It stood on a stone platform, inset into which was a marble slab that could be raised by a fixed metal ring to reveal an opening into a deep cavern below. A flight of stairs led to an underground passageway and into the Chamber of Immersion where cleansing rituals were performed. These practices are validated in early scriptures such as the Book of Ezekiel, which literally describes how the elders of Jerusalem “engaged in secret mysteries . . . of Egyptian provenance” in darkness under the Temple of Solomon, and refers to the secret chamber used for initiation as “the bridal chamber.”

The Copper Scroll.

The living resurrection ceremonies performed by the Essenes and other Near East sects up to the Christian era were themselves a continuation of rituals handed down fifteen hundred years earlier from the traditions of Pharaoh Seqnenre Taa in Luxor.[9] And even those were reenactments of identical ceremonies going back a further two thousand years, at which time there appears the concept of an inner group of initiates defined as ‘the living,’ who separate themselves from ordinary people, ‘the dead.’

At the temple of Edfu there’s a description of a ritual called ‘raising’ or ‘standing up,’ the knowledge of which was transmitted only to a select few within the inner temple. The initiation was conducted in subterranean chambers, many of which can still be accessed through passages hidden within Edfu’s hollow walls. It was this ritual that was still being enacted by the Essenes and the Jerusalem Church right up to their final days.

Not surprisingly, then, by the time people such as John the Baptist and Yeshua ben Yosef arrived on the scene, the teachings they professed hardly caused a batted eyelid. In fact they were welcomed with astonishment by a populace long accustomed to such secret knowledge being outlawed by the rabbis of Jerusalem or by the Romans.

The vehicle by which the concept of living resurrection was transmitted was called *the Mysteries* or *the Knowledge.* Like the parables taught in early Christian circles, the Mysteries were divided into two groups: the Lesser Mysteries took candidates through a conceptual understanding of living resurrection. The Greater Mysteries was the actual experience involving a voluntary death followed by a slow recovery, and it was taught only to a selective group. The initiate was placed in a figurative grave, his consciousness directed out of body, and in this altered state he crossed into the Otherworld and roamed its realms. Upon discovering the true place and nature of his soul, the initiate returned, convinced of his immortality, to face the perceived tyranny of physical death without fear because he'd already experienced paradise and was therefore free.

That's some benefit. No wonder the Gospel of Philip insists, "While we exist in the world we must acquire resurrection."[10]

As a man who was himself familiar with the secrets taught by the Essenes and the Nazoreans, Jesus too maintained a two-tier structure: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." To the many he offered simple teachings, but to those whom he initiated into his inner group—the few—they were given secret knowledge. In the Nag Hammadi texts, Jesus keeps referring to the kingdom of God as an inner mystery rather than a physical place, dropping hints here and there that he will transmit, in secret, "what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind."[11] Once the members of the inner brotherhood understood these teachings they were thereafter declared 'risen.'

The rituals and processes behind living resurrection were rarely written down; they were remembered using extraordinary feats of memory and communicated verbally only to candidates who'd passed long periods of strict observation. Any surviving texts concerning the secrets of the Mysteries indicate they consisted of a direct experience of the spirit world

requiring the suspension of normal physical life, including a person's waking consciousness, a know-how of the forces of nature, and an encounter with elemental forces including gods and souls of ancestors. Early philosophers such as Plato explain how these 'gods' were in fact occult forces bound in nature—suprarational and transcendental forces that cannot be rationalized by mental contemplation alone.

In the oldest Egyptian rituals this involved a crossing of the threshold of death in order for the initiate to observe himself as a spirit in the world of spirit. One underwent the experience of dying but only figuratively, a dismemberment from the material world and a reduction of the physical body insofar as it was possible to strip oneself of physical baggage to allow the soul to travel to finer dimensions. It was the relationship between the individual and these innate forces that formed the Egyptian sacred science of *heka,* what Europeans came to call magic.

The Mysteries indicated a sacred truth, one that words and images alone are incapable of representing but whose validity could be understood through a ritual 'ascent to heaven.' And the method by which this was achieved was called *initiation*.

Raising ceremony, Babylon.

3

What Is Initiation?

There's a familiar tenet throughout shamanism and the spiritual traditions of aboriginal cultures: an altered state of consciousness facilitates a mystical experience capable of imparting special knowledge. In fact it is one of the oldest shared beliefs among esoteric sects such as the Druids of Gaul, the Chaldeans of Syria, the Samaneans of Cactria, the Magi of Persia, and the Gymnosophists of India, all of who devoted themselves to out-of-body exploration with the aim of achieving personal illumination through spiritual resurrection. And the way neophytes experienced it was via the rigorous art of initiation.

Initiation into the Mysteries was a privilege open to a select few but not necessarily restricted to a social elite. Only a handful made it past the gates of the temple because few applicants were up to the task. To quote Pythagoras when turning enthusiasts away from his own academy at Croton, "Not every kind of wood is fit to be carved into the likeness of Mercury"—Mercury being the Roman regeneration of Djehuti, the Egyptian god who guides souls to the Otherworld.

Those who did make the grade first underwent a period of observation. The early Christian author Tertullian describes a period of probation lasting up to four years, essentially to gauge the candidates' level of trustworthiness and responsibility. During this period they were given general instructions and taught great truths hidden within obscure parables. Upon successfully completing the trial period, candidates were admitted into an inner group, and initiation into the fuller Mysteries ensued.

Initiation means ‘to become conscious.’ It is a technique that serves to guide higher, more penetrating frequencies into the body, which is believed to operate at one of the densest vibrations in nature. Because out-of-body experiences can be dangerous, only those with a firm grasp of the body’s electrical field were admitted into the process. Instruction was often conducted from temple to temple and performed in stages to prevent the body’s nerve centers and electrical circuits from burning out, each step slowly raising the vibration of the individual. Like a climber seeking to scale the Himalayas, they first had to acclimate and condition themselves before ascending to progressively higher peaks. Seekers learned to still their habits, condition the mind, and practice directing the body’s life energy consciously. They were also required to develop greater resistance to physical impulses, particularly the control of emotion.

Increasing degrees of initiation tested the candidates’ mettle in the face of fear, revealing the weaker participants’ diminishing desire to continue and thus thinning out their number once more. Mechanical means were employed to simulate experiences that mimicked the candidates’ eventual out-of-body experience—for example, they were made to feel as though falling into a pit or being overwhelmed by rushing water or wild animals. Those who passed such ordeals congratulated themselves on advancing toward the higher degrees of the Mysteries, only to be faced yet again with new forms of psychological preparation.

Once the candidate mastered these prerequisites—along with a number of unspecified procedures—the final stage in the process entailed a lengthy stay inside a sensory-deprived environment. According to classical historians such as Plutarch and Strabo, these places came in many forms: pyramids, pagodas, labyrinths, temples, caves, subterranean passages and chambers, vaulted rooms, spacious galleries, and secret rooms. Some of their walls and pillars were adorned with philosophical or moral truths.

Sometimes initiation took place inside a structure atop a type of mound surrounded by water, such as the island-temple of Philae, where the sacred marriage between Osiris—the resurrected god-man of Egypt—and his bride, Isis, was ritually performed by initiates in public, followed by a secret segment conducted privately in subterranean chambers that covered much of the original island. The event typically took place on the last night of the waning moon, beginning at sunset, continuing all night until sunrise.

At this stage of initiation, candidates were temporarily guided step-by-step into a trance state, asleep yet paradoxically awake, as the soul temporarily disengaged from the body and became aware of itself in the Otherworld. Most ancient writers agree that the final act of initiation—the shamanic journey—began with an initial descent into a kind of hell or underworld before finally reaching paradise. Under guided supervision from a hierophant or wisdomkeeper, the soul encountered supernatural creatures yet learned to overcome its natural impulse of revulsion or fear in order to arrive at that ultimate, sublime stage. The Macedonian compiler Stobaeus left us a record of his own experience:

Temple of Philae, where the mystery play of Osiris and Isis was performed.

> The mind is affected and agitated in death just as it is in initiation into the Grand Mysteries. The first stage is nothing but uncertainties, labourings, wanderings, and darkness. And now, arrived on the verge of death and initiation, everything wears a dreadful aspect; it is all horrors, trembling, and affrightement.

> But this scene once over, a miraculous and divine light displays itself . . . perfect and initiated they are free, crowned, triumphant, they walk in the regions of the blessed.[1]

The fourth-century Greek philosopher Themistius depicts the candidate encountering trepidation and uncertainty at first, but upon being conducted by a priest, proceeding in tranquility:

> Entering now into the mystic dome, he is filled with horror and amazement. He is seized with solicitude and total perplexity. He is unable to move a step forward: and he is at a loss to find the entrance to that void, which is to lead him to the place he aspires to. But now, in the midst of his perplexity, the prophet or conducting hierophant suddenly lays open to him the space before the portals of the temple.[2]

It is important to clarify that these apparitions were not evil, merely unfamiliar, and the unfamiliar elicits a natural reaction in the human mind. The Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus Lycaeus, himself an initiate, explains, “In all initiations and Mysteries, the gods exhibit many forms of themselves, and sometimes indeed an unfigured light of themselves is held forth to the view; sometimes this light is figured according to human form, and sometimes it proceeds into a different shape. Some of the figures are not gods, and excite alarm.”[3]

The Last Supper of Mithras, *a Zoroastrian, and later Roman, resurrected god-man.*

No wonder the Mysteries secrets were known to only a handful of custodians; few have the nerve to undergo such an ordeal. And given their responsibilities in a situation that could go disastrously wrong, with the potential for madness, even the possibility of death, it's not surprising the techniques were zealously protected from the ignorant.

And yet the benefits of penetrating the veil into the Otherworld were beyond belief. Proclus himself describes how, having overcome the fear of the unknown, the prize that awaits is magnificent.

> Having thoroughly purified him, the hierophant now discloses to the initiated a region all over illuminated and shining with a divine splendor. The cloud and thick darkness are dispersed: and the mind, which before was full of disconsolate obscurity, now emerges, as it were, into day, replete with light and cheerfulness, out of the profound depth into which it had been plunged.[4]

This point in the initiation was called *autopsia,* 'seeing things with one's own eyes.'

The second-century Berber writer Lucius Apuleius describes his initiation as being "like a voluntary death and like salvation obtained by grace," and by his direct experience with the divine goddess he was "in a

certain sense reborn and brought back on a road of a new blessing." For Lucius, this goddess was Isis, and meeting with her was regarded as a sacred marriage. The process required long preparation and the willingness of the candidate to be patient until the goddess deemed it appropriate for him to be admitted into the Otherworld.

If you successfully passed these tests you achieved a greater degree of self-consciousness, not to mention omnipotence and omniscience. Initiates who experienced living resurrection and successfully rose at dawn walked back into daily life with a sense of higher purpose, greater moral integrity, and reduced fear, practicing what they preached among 'the dead.' As the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily observed, "Those who have participated in the Mysteries become more spiritual, more just, and better in every way." To which Socrates added, "Those who are acquainted with the Mysteries insure to themselves very pleasing hopes against the hour of death."

Evidence that early Christians and related sects of the period were following a Gnostic doctrine of initiation into the mystery of living resurrection surfaced in 1958 in the library of the Mar Saba, a Greek Orthodox monastery in Palestine. It is a letter written by Clement of Alexandria—perhaps the most erudite Gnostic bishop in the second century—to his friend Theodore, in which he indicates that a hitherto unknown gospel was written by Mark the apostle in Alexandria around AD 90 that differed in content from his earlier work written in Rome. It was a secret gospel concerning Christ's inner teachings that "makes for progress toward gnosis [knowledge]." Clement continues, "Thus [Mark] composed a more spiritual gospel for the use of those who were being initiated. . . . When he died, he left his composition to the church of Alexandria, where it is even yet most carefully guarded, being read only to those who are being initiated into the great Mysteries."[5]

At its height Alexandria boasted some 2,400 temples, but the apex of learning was its laudable library. It comprised two sections: the larger, built of white marble and connected to a sacred site called the Mouseion, the Shrine to the Muses; and the smaller, a temple dedicated to Serapis, a distillation of the cult of Osiris. Together they formed a titanic collection of over 540,000 books and scrolls, one of the great wonders of the intellectual world where, according to the Roman historian Marcellinus, "They still

carefully preserve the elements of sacred rites as handed down in their secret volumes."

That all changed in AD 390 when a fanatical mob of Christian fundamentalists burned it down along with the people taking refuge inside. Coincidentally, it was during this period that the church conducted its coup and manufactured the astounding proposition that ignorance is of no consequence in religious matters, nor does it pose a barrier to holiness. In fact it is *conducive* to achieving holiness! Meanwhile, Gnostics and other initiatory sects were branded as heretics and outlawed.

And yet the truth was quite the opposite. Virtually all religious systems up to this point had emerged from individuals who'd been initiated into the Mysteries and were thus equipped with advanced spiritual understanding—Zoroaster, Buddha, Mani, the Vedic sages, the Egyptian and Greek philosophers, and so on. Given the circumstances, the unofficial slogan "ignorance is bliss" served the church well, for as Catholicism struggled for dominance in Alexandria and around the Mediterranean, it is clear from writings of the period that other belief systems were light years ahead, and these new, instant Christians were competing with better-educated peers. "If Christianity is to be more than a religion for the uneducated it must come to terms with Greek philosophy and Greek science," wrote Clement.

Secret society initiation ceremony. Melanesia, 1900.

The new religion, having disposed of or ignored the secret teachings, was considered less sophisticated, advertising as it did a simplistic, exoteric message preached by Paul to a largely illiterate flock. The Greek historian Plutarch, by contrast, in his treatise *De Iside et Osiride,* reveals the benefit of the esoteric experience of initiation into the Mysteries:

> While we are here below, encumbered by bodily affections, we can have no intercourse with God, save as in philosophic thought we may faintly touch him as in a dream. But when our souls are released [by the Mysteries] and have passed into the region of the pure, invisible and changeless, this God will be their guide and king who depend on him and gaze with insatiable longing on the beauty which may not be spoken of by lips of man. . . . By these means they may be the better prepared for the attainment of the knowledge of the First and Supreme Mind, whom the Goddess exhorts them in search after. For this reason is her temple called Iseion, alluding to that knowledge of the eternal and self-existent Being which may thus be obtained, if it be properly approached.

EASY ON THAT PLANT, BRO

In the surviving accounts of people undergoing initiation there is a recurring impression that the onset of the near-death simulation was a harrowing experience, despite months of physical and psychological preparation. Like anyone who's undergone the trial of the blind date knows, the short remedy in such a situation is to numb the senses to trepidation by consuming alcohol. During initiation, the inclination was to do pretty much the same: the candidate was offered a mild narcotic to assist the out-of-body journey through the course of the night.

Early evidence comes from one of the most studied temples in connection with initiation and the secrets of the Otherworld, the pyramid of

Unas at Saqqara, where exists an unusual inscription of the pharaoh ingesting certain substances to expand his awareness. "Unas eats their magic and ingests their spirits. Their big ones are for his morning meal, their mid-sized ones are for his evening meal, their little ones are for his nightly meal."[6] A description of a pharaoh's eating habits would hardly be of consequence, least of all because a dead pharaoh has no appetite. But the fact that Unas's body was not found inside the building suggests the text is conveying an important part of a ritual. We shall return to Unas and his ritual chamber later.

In ancient China it was normal practice for holy people to take flight from the body, fueled by alchemical narcotics, to wander through celestial spheres and sacred mountains. They even had an epithet describing sages who'd mastered living resurrection: "Ascended to Heaven at the height of the day." The founder of Taoism, Lao Tzu, himself regularly left his body to "go for a stroll at the origin of things."[7]

Evidence of mild hallucinogens is found in the ancient Persian text of Zand I Wahman Yasht, which describes the initiation of the philosopher prophet Zoroaster around 550 BC: "Ohrmazad, the sacred spirit, the creator of the righteous and corporeal existence, took the hand of Zoroaster and put liquid omniscient wisdom into it, and said 'drink it.' And Zoroaster drank it and omniscient wisdom was mixed into Zoroaster."[8] This libation may very well have been the herb *Peganum harmala* or Syrian rue, whose seeds and root contain the unusual psychoactive alkaloids harmine, harmaline, and tetrahydro that, when drunk, become a potent psychedelic.[9]

The *Book of Arda Viraf* describes a classic Zoroastrian initiation journey in which a priest is administered three cups of wine laced with the narcotic vishtasp in preparation to undertake a voluntary near-death experience. While in the Otherworld, Viraf the priest embarks on an information-gathering expedition. Meanwhile, back in the physical world, his living body remains comatose, laid out like a corpse and watched over by seven priestesses tending a fire while reciting ritual passages from the *Avesta* and chanting Gâthâs to keep negative forces away from his aura, in essence implementing a protective force field.

Seven days later Viraf's soul returns. He regains consciousness as though from a pleasant sleep and describes his Otherworld journey—how he crossed the Chinvat Bridge (Bridge of Separation) to be met by angelic

beings who remark, “Welcome Arda Viraf, although you have come when it is not your time.” Viraf is escorted to the places where souls dwell and describes how their positive beliefs and deeds take on the appearance of a radiant and beautiful damsel. He encounters another guardian angel holding golden scales for the weighing of the soul—the places of the stars, moon, and sun where positive words and deeds are welcomed, the radiant paradise of eternal life. Along this path of truth he is also shown the alternative path of falseness and the areas of suffering where the wicked linger in torment, or as the archangels describe it to Arda Viraf, “the reality of God and the archangels, and the non-reality of Akharman and the demons.” His journey continues on a star track linking the sun, moon, and stars, “the place where good thoughts are received with hospitality,” where he encounters souls with the brightness of the sun.

Viraf also mentions traveling along a seemingly endless bridge and coming to a turbulent river, swollen by tears of lamentation shed by the living for those departed. This point is crossed by all souls, some easily, some with great difficulty. Viraf’s guide angel explains, “Tell the world upon your return that, when you are in the world, make no lamentation and weeping without cause, because it creates so much more difficulty and harm to the souls of your departed.”[10] The point being made is that the soul is best assisted in its Otherworld journey by the inherent power in positive thought.

In Mitraism—which predates Zoroastrianism—the herb haoma is described in sacred texts as the hallucinogen of choice, with the intent of ‘triumph of righteousness.’ Mitran adepts, or Magi, also used the intoxicant plant soma, the “averter of death,” so called due to its use in astral travel, which allowed them to see beyond the veil during initiation. Interestingly, during the process of making the narcotic, the plant was deemed ‘sacrificed,’ and through its death others could become immortal.

For the Maya of Central America the ritual drink of choice was balché, made from the bark of a leguminous tree that, when fermented over a number of days with honey, transforms into a narcotic. It was traditionally prepared inside a canoe, a method as practical as it was symbolic, for it alludes to the allegorical journey taken by the disembodied soul aboard a solar boat along the Milky Way to the gateway of the Otherworld, which, for the Maya, resides in the three stars that make up the belt of Orion.

The Egyptians had their own version. The most pervasive narcotic found throughout their ceremonial and ritual art is the blue water lily *Nymphaea caerulea;* the plant itself was placed in the tombs of pharaohs such as Tutankhamun, whose sarcophagus was found covered with it.[11] Chemical analysis of the alkaloids found in blue water lily reveals that, taken in high doses, it can induce psychosis, yet in low doses it behaves as a tranquilizer,[12] underlining the art involved in administering narcotics during ritual to achieve the desired result.

In Greece, initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries fell under the tutelage of the goddess Demeter, who is portrayed alongside a bundle of grain, often depicted in purple. This little oddity actually offers a big clue as to what took place during the final rite of initiation, which commenced with a drink from a special ceremonial cup called a *kykeon,* kept in a chest whose contents remained secret to outsiders. The cup contained a narcotic, most likely a distillation of ergot, a psychoactive fungus that takes on the appearance of a purple mold on cereal crops.[13]

The administering of narcotics appears to have been an art in itself. And in contrast to pure shamanism, a low dosage was all that was required to deliver a calming state so that the hallucinogen became the vehicle into the spirit world rather than a device that influenced what initiates saw when they reached their destination.

Pharaoh imbibing blue water lily.

If everything went as planned, the initiate, having spent the night immersed in the Otherworld and still delicate from the experience, was assisted out of the secret chamber in time to greet the morning star, typically Sirius, the star associated with wisdom and divine insight, whereupon he or she was declared ‘risen from the dead.’

Tellingly, the hieroglyph of the morning star has the literal meaning ‘divine knowledge,’ or more accurately, ‘knowledge of the laws of nature.’

If one of the purposes behind initiation was to experience the light body—the reconnection of the soul with the Source and, hopefully, its return to the body with insights—it stands to reason that the secret teachings leading you to that point required a privileged group that constituted a society apart.

Demeter with her serpents and purple grain.

As we shall see, it did.

4

Early Followers of The Way

The removal of evidence of earlier crucified, atoning god-men by fundamental Christians sought to deny the ancient roots of Jesus's story in order to exalt singular status upon the new, Catholicized hero. But alas, the idea had long been in vogue.

Sumeria, circa 2000 BC: Damuzi/Tammuz, shepherd-god who retires to a sacred mountain to contemplate true holiness, then rises from the dead.

Phrygia, circa 1170 BC: Atys, atoning god-man suspended on a tree, is buried, rises again to be revered as a messiah.

Tibet, circa 700 BC: Indra, atoning god-man, born of a virgin of black complexion, walks on water, predicts the future, is nailed to a cross, and rises from the dead. His followers were called Heavenly Teachers.

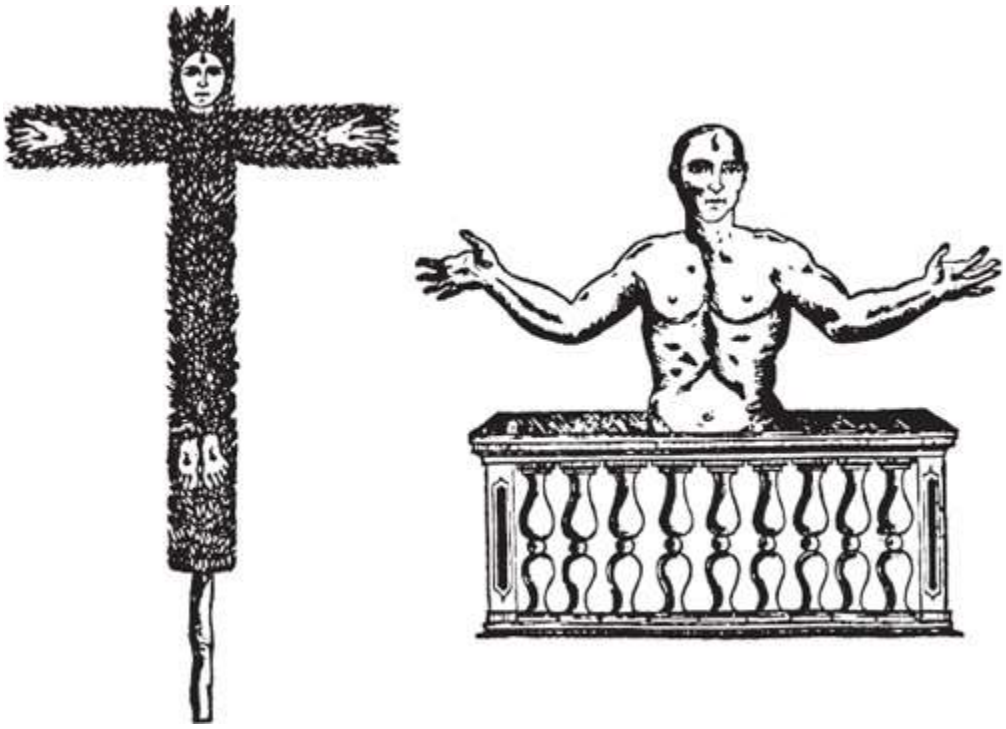
Nepal, circa 622 BC: Iao, god-man, nailed to a tree, rises from the dead.

Java, circa 552 BC: Wittoba, god-man, nailed to a tree, and symbolized by a crucifix.[1]

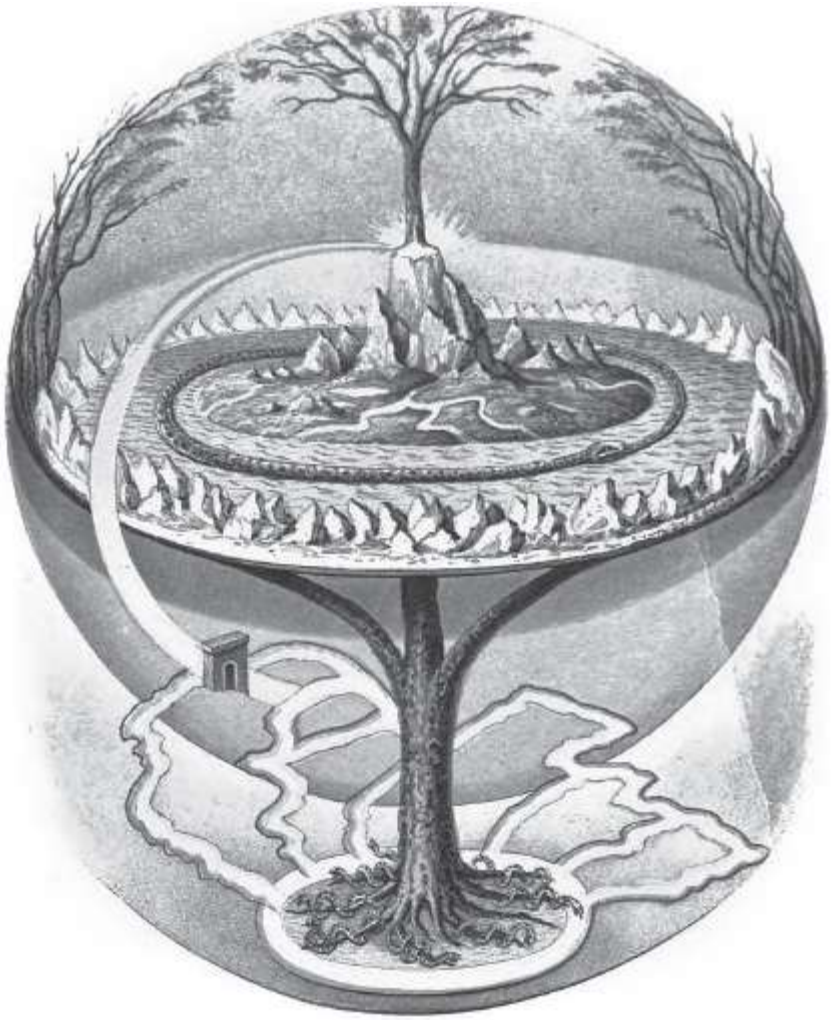
From Phoenicia to China, the pagan world celebrated the hero who crosses into the Otherworld as a 'dead' man, only to rise as a god and become an example of an enlightened being walking the Earth. Five hundred years before Jesus, even the Greeks were enacting a morality play of the life of Prometheus, the atoning god-man of the Caucasus who rises

from the dead after being nailed to an upright beam of timber with extended arms of wood. The symbolism is very clear: the hero has developed knowledge of the lower, middle, and upper worlds, represented by the roots, trunk, and fruit of the world tree. He has returned 'christed' or spiritualized, in control of the four elements that sustain the world, each represented by the equal-armed cross.

In his *Alphabetum Tibetanum* of 1762 the monk Augustinus Georgius lists two images of Indra as depicted in Nepal. One shows the god-man affixed to a wooden cross covered in rich foliage, with only the face, hands, and feet visible, the latter pierced as though having been nailed to what amounts to a Tree of Life (the resurrected Norse god Odin is similarly hung on Yggdrasil, the tree of life). The ensuing image depicts Indra's upper torso rising out of a box.



Crucified, resurrected god-man Indra. From Nepal.



Yggdrasil, the World Tree, to which initiates were said to be 'nailed' after successfully completing initiation into the Mysteries.

Regardless of whether they were inventions serving a moral purpose or real-life individuals—and many cultures assert they *were* real—these heroes were merely reenacting the regenerative cycle of nature. Global traditions show again and again how the rebirth of the sun as king was celebrated for three days after the winter solstice, when his accouchement with the Queen of Heaven—the Celestial Virgin—brought forth the infant savior in the first minutes after midnight on December 24. Indeed the sun does appear to stand still on the same place along the horizon the three days around the solstice before reversing its course. The light overcomes the dark of winter and the rebirth of life and land is ensured for yet another cycle.

As for the hero, he or she undertook a ritual journey corresponding to the rhythm of the reborn sun—people like the god-man Adonis, who was celebrated on December 25 in the temple of Jerusalem long before the time of Jesus.

From Native American rites of passage to the pilgrimages of Chinese seekers, the oldest rituals around the globe followed a near-identical prescription. Typically the quest began in a remote location, a place of solitude conducive to inner contemplation, followed by a period of sensory deprivation inside a secluded environment where, immersed in the cosmic world, initiates became aware of the purpose behind the universe they inhabit. Having arrived at a state of self-realization, they discovered the divine within themselves and returned to the body with a more informed view of doctrines to be adopted in daily life. And the synonym by which practitioners referred to the process was 'The Way.'

These individuals did not die a physical death; they merely shed their ignorance of the laws of life by successfully crossing into the Otherworld, returning with a discovery of great significance that illuminated them immensely.

NATIVE AMERICA

Sacred mountains occupy a central theme in Native American folklore as doorways to and from the Otherworld. They were seen as universities from whom they sought the vision of guidance. In New York State, Mount Marcy was originally called "the Great Mystery" by the Iroquois, while in New Mexico, standing high above the flat desert like a vitrified guardian angel, Tsé Bit'a'í is sacred to the Hopi, to the Navajo (who call it Naat Ani Néz), and before them, the Anasazi, for whom it was also the center of their creation myth. These spiritually attuned people were said to have alighted at this very location from the Otherworld, the dark peak marking its gateway.

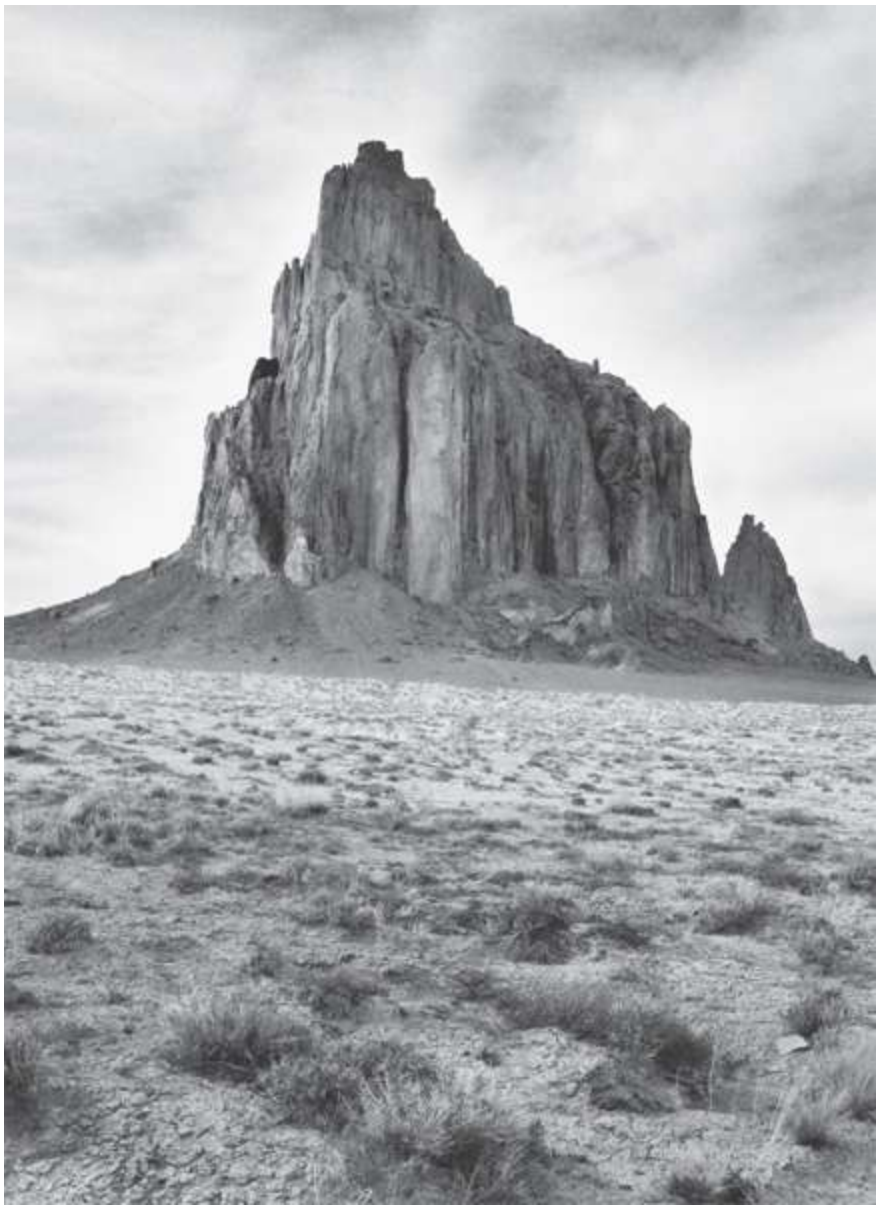
Tsé Bit'a'í is as sacrosanct to these cultures as Mount Kailas is to Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. No one is permitted to climb it. Shamanic flights into the Otherworld took place over the course of a night inside the crevasses around the base of the near-vertical breccia. Perhaps it is for this reason that its name translates as "rock with wings."

Although the Anasazi have long since departed for the next world, to the south, the Tewa still perform ceremonies at Tsikumu, a sacred mountain near their pueblo. Like so many Pueblo shrines, Tsikumu is visually disappointing but powerful of presence, being as it is the Tewa's portal into the Otherworld, from which they claim to have emerged long ago. Here initiates work with an energy called *po-wa-ha* that allows them to flow from this plane of reality to the Otherworld and back. The tradition is timeless, based on ritual handed down from earlier, nameless people.

Tsikumu is not a lone doorway but the center of an orderly geodetic cosmology that includes the Tewa Valley's most prominent feature, Black Mesa, where there exists a ritual cave marking another entry point into the Otherworld, and where long ago there resided a family from a race of giants.[2]

In Southern California one of the best-documented access points into the Otherworld is the sacred hill Cuchama, meaning 'exalted high place.' For as long as tribal memory can recall, it has been a spiritual sanctuary where boys, upon reaching manhood, and following initiation by the elder, would be sent on a solitary vision quest in preparation to discover the Superior Man within. Completion of the ritual took place in darkness on the summit or inside its sacred cave, which appears to have been artificially sculpted. Solitary, silent, and free from all self-seeking, the candidate was left to "the worship of the Great Mystery."[3]

During their journeys into the Otherworld, initiates describe being "met by Shining Beings," shown their origins before incarnation, given special knowledge, and offered guidance concerning the path they'd chosen in this particular lifetime. Upon descending the mountain and returning to the tribe suitably enlightened, each individual was declared a "new-born one." As a mark of his newfound clarity of vision and spiritual resurrection, the individual was bathed before entering into meditation for four days, eating sparingly, and avoiding meat for several months around the period of initiation. He was also encouraged, after marriage, to help transmit the esoteric teachings to others.



Tsé Bit'a'í, portal to the Otherworld for the Anasazi, Hopi, and Navajo.

In the Great Lakes region, the Naudiwessi performed a ritual in which the candidate came to be admitted into "the friendly society of the Spirit" by being put through a pretend death—by ingesting a seed that made him drop to the ground motionless as though he'd been shot, only later to be reawakened by previously initiated tribesmen pounding their fists on him and returning the bewildered man to full consciousness. A similar, albeit gentler ritual by the Ojibway, the Dakota, and the Sioux involved the

candidate being knocked to the ground and resurrected by a blow from a soft-skin medicine bag.

The initiation ceremonies in the southwestern corner of the North American continent appear to be continuations from a race of prehistoric people said to have been of very tall stature. Traditions assert that this race of giants moved from the north in remote times, and indeed a giant skeleton was discovered by Spanish Jesuits in 1765 near the Mission de San Ignacio. The ribs alone measured two feet, making this individual eleven feet tall. A second skeleton, measuring over nine feet tall, was found by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1920s in Lompoc, and was claimed by a tribal elder to be a remnant of the race of giants called Allewani, from where the mighty eastern American river Allegheny derives its name. In addition to the unusual skeletons, during the last years of their tenure in Southern California, the Jesuits also discovered ceremonial caves bearing painted images of men and women dressed in clothing not typical to local native cultures.[4]

Being more attuned to the land, the nomadic tribes of North America rarely built permanent temples because, to them, the whole landscape was sacred. Rather, they perceived hot spots of energy on the land where an intimate conversation can be initiated with the Otherworld. Hopi legends describe how contact between these two worlds is made umbilically through a hollow reed called *sipapu*. This reed would appear inside a *kiva*—the Native American equivalent of a temple—for which a small, round hole was made beside the fire pit, allowing the ancestors to emerge in front of those in attendance, and, following a closed ritual ceremony inside the kiva, a conversation was initiated between the mortal and the imperishable. The same concept is recorded in the Japanese creation myth *Nihongi,* which mentions how a reed-shoot was produced between heaven and earth allowing communication to be established between the two.

Sipapu hole inside a kiva.

As the Mohave people once pointed out, knowledge gained through such encounters was not a thing to be learned but acquired by each person according to the visions received while in contact with the Otherworld.[5]

AUSTRALASIA

Initiatory rites consisting of a simulated death and resurrection were generally offered to youths reaching the point of puberty and, like those performed by the Wonghi and Ualaroi of Australia, involved a secret ritual observed strictly by a group apart from the rest of their culture who'd already undergone initiation. During the ritual, the youths came face-to-face with a spirit being called Daramulun who took them into 'the distance,' cut them up, and reconstituted them into a new, pure form.

One of the more dramatic initiation ceremonies was performed by the Murring, in which a medicine man was laid down in a grave, lightly covered with sticks and earth, and made to resemble the spirit of rejuvenation. While motionless novices were placed beside him as though in a trance, the medicine man acted as the protective spirit guide while the

novices traversed the Otherworld. Upon their return, they all rose together as if from the dead.

In northern New Guinea, the Yabim, Bukaua, Tai, and Tami constructed a special temple, about one hundred feet in length, in a remote part of the forest specifically for such an occasion. It was modeled in the shape of a mythical monster, with a mouth or entrance forming the tallest part of the building, which then tapered toward the rear—much like the earthen barrows of Britain and northern France, which were used for similar purposes. A betel palm formed the axis of the structure and at the same time represented the backbone of the Great Being. The initiate stayed in the hut for months if necessary, shunning all contact with the outside world, until reemerging resurrected from the belly of the beast.

In the Indonesian island of Ceram the initiate was placed inside a wooden shed with a bloodied spear thrust through the roof, to symbolize the removal of his head by a spirit, so that the rest of his body could be taken into the Otherworld to be regenerated and transformed.[6]

A vestige of these traditions was still evident in the mid-nineteenth century on Mana Island in New Zealand, where existed a *whare whakairo* (a Māori sacred house) named Kaitangata—'eat man'—accurately describing the purpose of this sacred abode as a place where one comes to be symbolically de-fleshed. Māori mythology identifies Kaitangata as a mortal man who marries the supernatural female Whaitiri; however, he is also a son of the immortal star-god Rehua, an entity who possesses the power to cure the blind—those who 'do not see'—and revive the dead. This personage is identified with Sirius.

What is astonishing about such rituals throughout the Pacific is how they are near-perfect adaptations of the Osirian myth of the Egyptians in which the god-man is placed inside a large box, cut up into pieces, reconstituted, and in one version, resurrected as a palm tree.

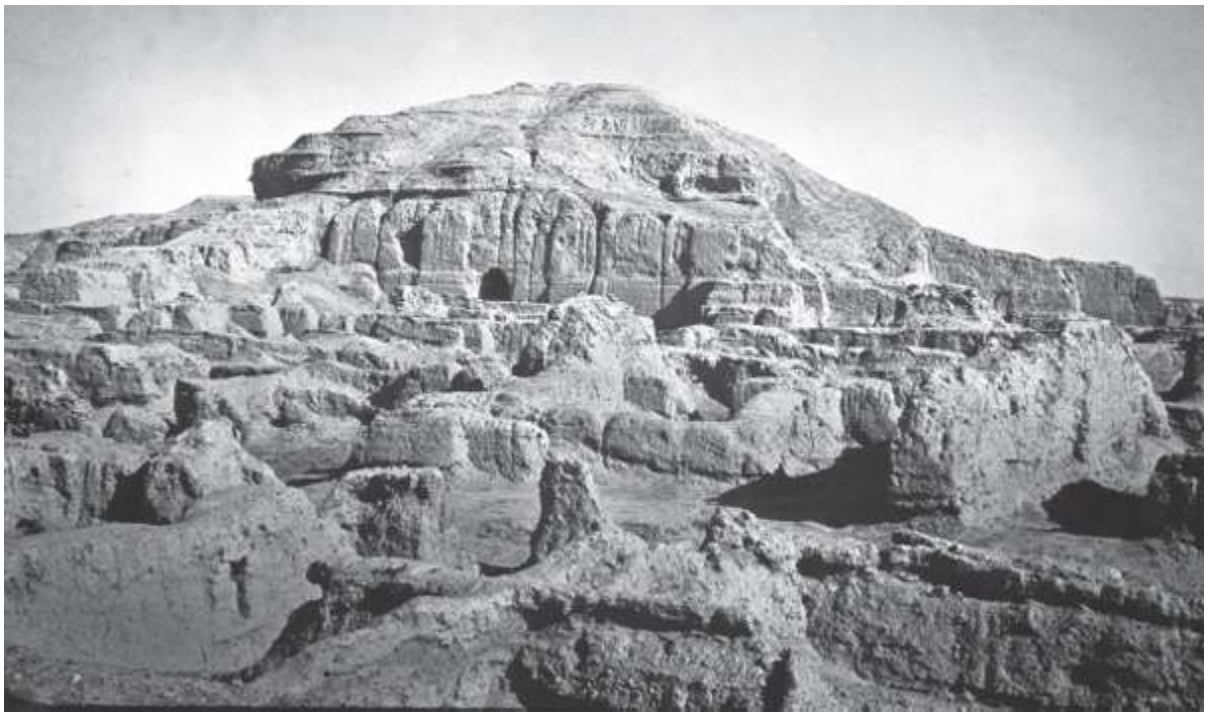
PERSIA AND THE CULT OF MITHRA

Long before a group of mystics called Parsis fled persecution and settled in Mumbai in the tenth century, their predecessors, the Zoroastrians, preserved a marvelous religious heritage throughout Mesopotamia, and later, Persia.

Their scriptures are replete with references to sacred mountains where people disappeared for long periods of time to seek contact with the Otherworld. The most referenced is Mount Ushi-darena, a name derived from *hûsh dar,* meaning 'to illuminate and sustain by divine consciousness.' According to Avestan literature this high peak marks the location where wisdom is received by a person in a receptive state of mind. Returning pilgrims were described as possessing *khvarenah,* 'divine glory.'

The earliest accounts of spiritually connected places in Persian Sanskrit literature state that a golden tube protrudes from the summit of sacred mountains such as Mount Sokanta, extends deep into the earth, and stretches out into space—not unlike the description given by Native Americans and Japanese. This energetic conduit is said to allow nature's forces to instill a state of superabundant consciousness in the recipient. Strangely enough, in one of those special moments where science accidentally validates legend, magnetic tubes linking the Earth with the sun and opening like portals throughout the day were proved to exist by NASA in 2008.[7]

One of the most ancient resurrection traditions in Mesopotamia was performed every year during the winter solstice festival of Akitu, when the god of fertility, Marduk, descended into the Otherworld before rising triumphantly back into the material world three days later. The human reenactment of this regeneration was performed by the existing ruler, who was disrobed in public before being confined in the mountain—a man-made stepped pyramid called a ziggurat.[8] No wonder, then, that ziggurats were considered to be the meeting place between gods and men, the threshold between tangible and unseen.



Ziggurat of Ur, virtually indistinguishable from a sacred mountain.

These colossal, mud-brick structures have not fared well over time, their unstable condition making it impossible to validate the existence of internal chambers that may have been used for the ritual of living resurrection. But what is known is that each structure was crowned with a temple at the summit whose inner chamber could only be accessed through an impractically small opening, either to make a person stoop low in humility or to limit the amount of light penetrating the space and thus enhance the sensory deprivation inside the chamber. The thread of the story then gets lost in Babylonian culture when, around 2000 BC, there appear the roots of what would become the religious philosophy of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroaster sought and attained illumination at Mount Ushi-darena where he mastered the secrets of nature. His disciple Asmõ-Khanvant was likewise initiated, whereupon he too attained spiritual wisdom. One of the fruits of these insights came in the form of the *Avesta,* the sacred literature of Zoroastrianism. Its most ancient core, the Gâthâs, claims to provide the pathway to the Otherworld. Clearly, for this to have been written implies Zoroaster traveled there and returned with significant perspicacity. His teachings certainly cultivated an enormous following, which elevated him to messianic status, so it may come as no surprise to hear that Zoroaster was

saved from death in infancy, retired to a wilderness cave to contemplate true holiness, was crucified, and resurrected.

A central theme of Zoroastrianism is the ancient and highly influential Aryan cult of Mitra. The name in Avestan means ‘causing to bind.’ So to walk in the footsteps of the Mithraic Mysteries is to seek unity with the source of all things—hence why this god is associated with divine wisdom. He is also the guardian of the Bridge of Separation, the route that connects the soul with the Otherworld.

Mitra appears in Vedic literature around 2000 BC as a rejuvenating god, often paired with a female counterpart named Varuna, forming the principle of paired opposites like the sun and moon. He was a solar chariot god, partook in a sacred meal, and his act of self-sacrifice was an example for others on the quest to find redemption for the soul, and thus victory over its earthbound existence.

Mitra’s symbolic color was red—the color of twilight prior to sunrise—and every December 25 he was reborn from a rock. A bright light in the sky heralded the event, drawing shepherds to the location whereupon they are informed of the importance of the event by a divine messenger. Other unspecified gods are also in attendance. His life was then celebrated a second time at the spring equinox.[9]

Mitra was so influential throughout Persia that he was absorbed into the teachings of Zoroaster as Mithra. In this cult, aspirants immersed themselves in an underground stone chamber, either natural or man-made, where they underwent regeneration after being enclosed within a kind of boat or retaining vessel for a predetermined amount of time. Initiation into the Mysteries requires the hero to enter a dark world—a cave or chamber representing the primordial womb from which all life originates—to sacrifice his animal-material urge if his spiritual soul is to be released and reborn.

The god-man Mithra himself was said to have entered a ritual cave and killed his animal-material self by plunging a knife into the spinal cord of a bull, causing a cornucopia of wheat and wine to be released and offered to the sun. The tale later resurfaces in Minoan Crete, where the hero Theseus undertakes a journey through an underground labyrinth to successfully slay his animal self, the Minotaur.

The philosopher Porphyry of Tyre writes that temples associated with this cult were mirror images of the original grotto consecrated to Mithra somewhere in the mountains of Persia. Porphyry also notes how, during initiation, the candidate was presided by the moon or a lunar deity—which itself was equated with a cow or a bee, as were the priestesses in attendance who were addressed as bees. Preparation began with baptism followed by severe discipline of the body, sometimes by as much as eight different types of trials in which aspirants demonstrated their courage, mental fortitude, and mindfulness. All these tribulations were intended to facilitate the candidate's peaceful regeneration in paradise. When they successfully reemerged from the door of the cave or chamber, initiates were deemed reborn from a heifer, declared resurrected, and thereafter represented by a bee.[10]

Such traditions must have endured for a considerable time because evidence of their practice was discovered by Alexander the Great when he vanquished Persepolis in 330 BC. Alexander visited a temple built by the Persian king Cyrus, a ziggurat intended as the king's tomb but with the notable exception that there was no evidence of a body ever having been interred. Legends state that Cyrus was actually buried under his ziggurat, which itself is located in the midst of an area the Persians called Paradise. On the summit stood a rectangular building with a chamber at its heart, accessed by a very narrow passageway. It was in here that Alexander found a golden bed, a trough or ritual sarcophagus made of gold, and an abundance of garments.[11] Clearly these items were superfluous to a dead person, giving the impression that the chamber was meant for a living being expecting to return to daily duties. More to the point it suggests that for several thousand years a ritual associated with living resurrection was conducted in this part of the world.

As the influence of Mithra subsequently flowed westward he came to be associated with the constellation Orion, thus linking this god-man with Osiris. Inevitably his cult reaches the shores of the Mediterranean and enters the Roman Empire and takes on yet another subtle name change: Mithras.[12]

The cult of Mithras vied with early Christianity on equal terms for five hundred years before one of its adherents, the emperor Constantine, replaced the hero of the story with Jesus, at a stroke elevating this

newcomer from mere mortal into resurrected god-man. And yet hundreds of years before Christianity, Mithraism already embraced the theology and rituals now cherished by Christianity, among them the imbibing of wine as a metaphor of sacrificial blood, the partaking of a small loaf of bread or wafer bearing the sign of a cross (the Eucharist), and a last, sacred supper. To counteract claims of usurpation, Catholic writers claimed the devil, knowing in advance of the coming of the Christian rituals, imitated them before they existed in order to denigrate them.[13] Early church writers additionally falsified the original story, going so far as to replace the gods present at Mithras's birth with Magi, which inadvertently acknowledged the Persian origin of the myth while at the same time demeaned the Magi by showing them idolizing a Christian infant.

Much of what is known about Mithraism comes from late Greek and Roman accounts in the eastern Mediterranean and from temples in southern Italy that survived Christian persecution. Neophytes wishing to join the Mithraic Mysteries entered as *frates* (brothers), and underwent a period of observation before being initiated through seven levels, the names of which survive in Latin: Corax (raven), Nymphus (secret bride), and Miles (warrior). These preceded the adept levels, each of which was blessed with an anointment of honey: Leo (lion), Perses (laurel), Heliodronus (messenger of the sun), and finally, Pater (father).

The titles are highly suggestive of the function and responsibility inherent in each degree. For example, a Perses was defined as a 'keeper of the fruit' and was associated with the moon, while its totem—the scythe—identifies the title with Perseus, the god who uses it to behead the monster-adversary Medusa, thereby sealing the candidate's maturity and the fruits of wisdom that come from such an awakening.[14] Writing in *De Abstinentia,* Porphyry notes that the Mithraic ritual was open to both sexes, with male adepts called lions, and women, lionesses. The contemporary cults of Cybele and Attis were also open to women. Study and training were intense, harsh, and difficult with every individual's actions under close scrutiny. Candidates were bound and blindfolded during a swearing-in ritual in which they declared to uphold the secrets about to be entrusted to them. And if they agreed to the terms they were tossed over a river or ditch filled with water. An adept armed with a sword would then cut their bonds and

remove the blindfold. Another part of the ritual involved the blindfolding of a candidate inside a sarcophagus resembling a bathtub.

Mithraic temples were typically small, capable of housing no more than a handful of selected people, with the entrance generally placed in the west and the altar in the east. The nave was lined on either side with an angled bench where candidates reclined before being administered the final meal; in southern Europe and coastal Syria these unusual benches were called *praesepia* (cribs). The last thing reclining initiates gazed upon as they fell into unconsciousness was the Milky Way painted upon the arched roof of the temple, along with a ladder of stars with souls ascending and descending.[15]

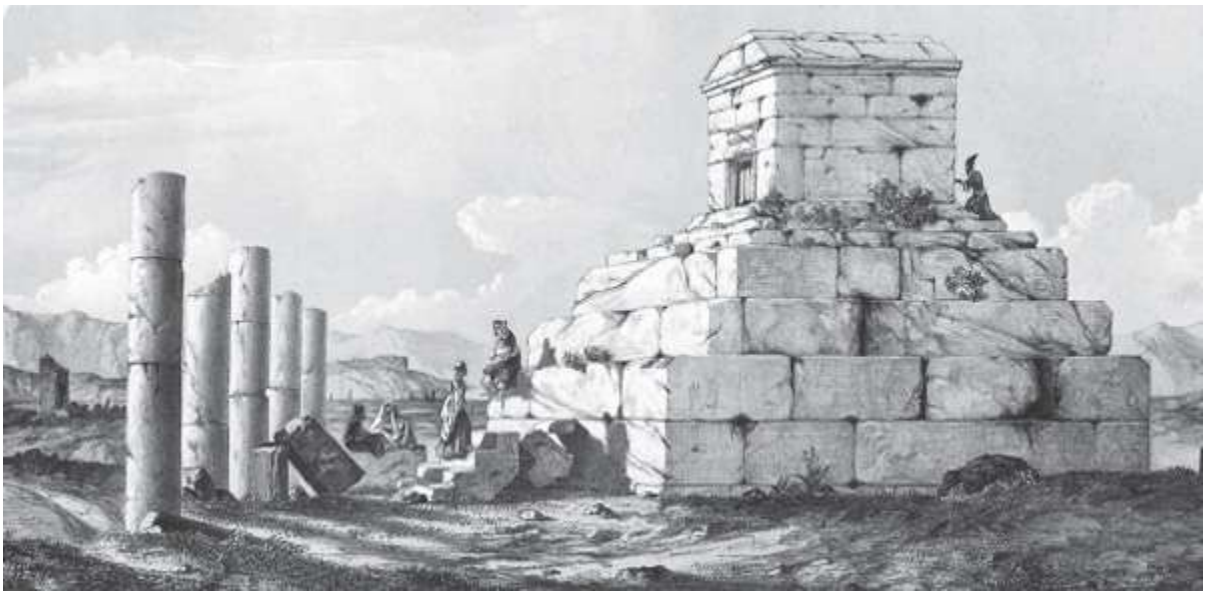
Such Mithraea were built underground, leading the writer Tertulian to note in *De Corona* the irony that Mithrasians venerate a god of light in "what is truly a camp of darkness." Mithra was a god of balance and naturally his seat was the equinox. So it is not surprising that the Mithraea that have survived destruction reveal a small hole in the ceiling of the temples to allow a ray of light to shine upon the altar at the equinox.[16]

Murals inside one Mithraeum in Ostia depict initiation scenes in vivid detail. Members of the higher degrees are shown taking the sacred meal while paters—the sole repositories of sacerdotal knowledge—preside over the ritual. Another mural features a candidate kneeling on one knee and swearing an oath, just like the ritual in modern Freemasonry. Another shows the candidate on both knees, with arms crossed over the chest, in what is called the Osiris position.

Altars typically depicted the scene of Mithra stabbing a bull from whose wound sprout three ears of wheat. Since Zoroastrian mythology also assigns the bull to the god of darkness, this symbolic icon encompasses the aim of the ritual that leads to the ripening of the soul and its latent fertility as a result of its rebirth.

Such icons were accompanied by the figure of a divine virgin holding an infant with her left hand while her right holds a stick with which to pluck the fruit from the tree of wisdom standing behind her. A veil covers her head, around which shine seven rays of light.

Needless to say, Mithraism became the prime quarry from which Catholicism plundered its foundation stone.



Ziggurat of Cyrus the Great. No body was found inside.

The geographic area of Persia bears the imprint of some of the world's oldest civilizations, specifically the Mesopotamian. It is therefore highly likely that Mithraic rituals were themselves a residue of an even older culture, such as the Scythian, which existed in and around the Carpathian region east of the Black Sea and migrated southeastward.[17] For one thing, the existence of ancient precuneiform writing, often attributed to Mesopotamia, and which precedes Sumerian cuneiform, was found one thousand years earlier in Transylvania;[18] even the very name of the Sumerian capital, Ur, comes from the Scythian word for 'Lord.' To the point, at the center of Scythian culture was its royal priestly caste, the Tuadhe d'Anu, also referred to as the Sumaire and Lords of Light, who were renowned for their transcendent powers, particularly their ability to access the highest state of consciousness called Sidhe,[19] that same out-of-body state practiced by those masters of the initiatic arts of India, the Siddhis. To this effect the Scythian lords, the Tuadhe d'Anu, built colossal earthen mounds or *kurgans* atop secret stone chambers, a number of which contained empty sarcophagi.

One such kurgan is Sengileevskoe-2 near Strovopol, Russia. Excavations in 2013 revealed a secret rectangular chamber in which were buried gold artifacts of superlative quality. Of specific interest are three gold cups containing a black residue, analyzed as a brew consisting of the

narcotic opium, impregnated with smoke from cannabis, which would have been burned to create a vapor-bath inside the chamber.[20] But it is the decorations on the cups that reveal much about the ritual that took place here, for they show highly detailed and dramatic scenes of animals and humans fighting and dying, not to mention a depiction of a bearded elder stabbing a younger man in the spinal cord, a feature identical to the later Mithraic scenes of the hunter stabbing the bull in exactly the same anatomical location. Incidentally, both 'hunters' wear the same Phrygian cap. Such graphic images represent the rite of passage into the Scythian Otherworld, which culminates in the ritual sacrifice of the immature younger self.

Scythian initiation cup.

THE HOME OF ELF

Tracing the concept of the Otherworld to Mesopotamia brings us to the true nature of the elf.

Five thousand years ago the word *El* identified a 'shining one,' referring to an ascended person, a god-man, or a being of angelic status. By

the time it reached Saxony, the name had morphed to *elf,* whose abode in Norse mythology is Alfheim, which transmigrated to ancient Scotland as Elphyne and Elphame, literally 'Elf-home.'

In early Nazarene philosophy this Otherworld is likened to a heavenly kingdom, and neatly explains the misinterpreted initiatic phrase spoken by Jesus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven."[21] Initiates of this matrilinear heritage—which included such notables as Lilith, Miriam, Bathsheba, and Mary Magdalene—were associated with high wisdom as well as a messianic bloodline.[22]

This is the same realm to which Hylas, hero of Apollonius's Greek myth Jason and the Argonauts, is transported by the water nymphs, a domain he figuratively enters by way of a sacred pool that constitutes *daleth,* the very doorway to the Light. What Apollonius of Alexandria is conveying in his epic from 250 BC is the demise of ego and desire, a metaphoric death, from which one is reborn so as to become focused in a different dimension. As an initiate himself, he would have known.

In Kabbalistic tradition, *daäth* (whence *death*) means 'higher knowledge,'[23] and its location on the Tree of Knowledge equates to a kind of bridge linking the principles of generation and regeneration, an interface between two opposite yet complimentary states of being, a position no doubt supported by the ancient Egyptians, whose terms for 'tomb' and 'womb' were interchangeable and mutually supportive as routes to a specialized knowledge that can only be truly grasped while in the Otherworld.[24]

In so many world myths and tales describing the path of the initiate, water marked the symbolic boundary between the material world and the home of elf; it was the first step toward entering the transcendental state, illustrating the importance of baptism as the first stage of initiation. In this state, one resides within this world while not being of this world, by virtue of one's higher spiritual and intellectual achievement. In a gnostic sense, it is a living beyond the normal state of mortal life. The color representing this state was green, the color of nature, and later, the color attributed to elves and to Otherworld figures such as Osiris, Briddhe, and Siva; it was also the Gaels' color of death, of Venus and fertility, hence why it is not ritually used in the Catholic Church, who further debased the sacred connotations of this hue during the Middle Ages by associating it with envy.

JAPAN

Just as the Cochimi and Yuma tribes venerate Cuchama as the "exalted high place," so the Japanese pay homage to Fuji-no-yama, the "Honorable Mountain." For centuries pilgrims have undertaken initiation on this and other Japanese sacred mountains to find *shugendo*—The Way—which they say develops the spiritual power dormant in every individual.

The word *shugendo* is highly descriptive: *shu* is nurturing the enlightenment of an initiate's inherent divine nature; *gen,* his innate realization; and *do,* the attainment of *nehan,* the equivalent of nirvana. Here we find parallels to Egyptian Mysteries, for Shu is also one of the Egyptian primordial gods, the mediating entity between what is above and what lies below. The Egyptians believed if Shu failed to hold his son Geb (God of the Earth) and his daughter Nut (Goddess of the Sky) in perfect equilibrium, life simply could not be created.

Since one of Shu's grandchildren is the god-man of resurrection, Osiris, it is interesting to note that one interpretation of the Japanese word *fuji* is 'everlasting life,' a core objective of the soul's contact with the Otherworld.[25]

Perhaps the most important sacred mountain in the practice of shugendo is Haguro. In ancient times, during the processional walk along its thirty-three primary temples, initiates reflected on the nature of the mythical couple who created the world, and upon reaching the summit they claimed to "enter the mountain" and "depart for the Otherworld."[26] This belief is still maintained by followers of the mountain sect of Shinto (the religion of Japan), who believe that by ascending sacred mountains one attains spiritual purification between the body and the divine. To reinforce the point, it is customary for pilgrims to wear white garments. And although there is no known record of a ritual cave on Fuji, adepts do refer to its near-perfect circular crater as "the sanctuary."

Japan's oldest mystical practice, Shinto, has its roots in the Shén Dao of China, the 'philosophical path of the spirit,' better known by its abbreviated name, Tao.

Arguably the most sacred of all Japan's Shinto shrines is Ise Jingu; in earlier times its wisdomkeepers were the *jinni,* teachers who embody the

knowledge of the spirits.[27] Ise Jingu's ancient sanctity and importance is described in the *Kujiki-72,* Japan's oldest prehistorical text, whose seamless doctrine of history and metaphysics impacted Japanese esoteric thought over millennia. This controversial narrative was discovered in the shrine itself.

One of the many stories found in the *Kujiki-72* describes the descent of the heavenly messenger Nigihayahi, who brings with him ten treasures in the form of sacred teachings. Nagihayahi is instructed by his superiors that, should his body or those around him ever be troubled or pained, by applying the teachings, the 'dead' will be brought back to life. Some of the titles—such as the Jewel of Life, the Jewel of Resurrection, and the Ceremonial Cloth of the Bee—tellingly convey important initiation practices.

Another central component in the text is a kind of divine virgin by the name of Amaterasu. As well as being a *kami* (a god or essence whose energy permeates nature and generates all phenomena), she is also the female representation of the sun, and thus all knowledge resides within her. She is married to the god of the moon, but when he falls out of favor, Amaterasu withdraws to a cave and darkness befalls the Earth. However, she is soon reminded of her responsibility to foster fertility and reemerges to bring light to the universe. It's at this very moment that she merges with her male kami and becomes a single entity by the name Amateru and descends to the location that, in time, becomes the shrine of Ise Jingu. Residing in this sacred site, this single woman-man teaches the mechanics of Creation called *Ise-no-Michi* (*Way of Ise*), and its teachings ensured the alchemical marriage of the initiate.

The Way of Ise required long and careful study if it was to be adopted correctly in daily life. This was carried out within Izawa-nomiya, a secluded and restricted area of the shrine presided by a fraternity of adepts who lived as a separate entity to the rest of the complex. Together with two attendant temples it formed a three-mile-long ritual environment called Place of the Way.[28]

The methods of the *Kujiki-72* are complex ritual affairs, compounded by an ancient Japanese text only decipherable by a handful of scholars, and further obscured by allegory and metaphor. At its core is the description of a universe regulated by five constitutions comprising seventeen Ways. Its

cornerstone is the secret Way of Heavenly Being, which itself comprises the secret initiation Michinoku (Depth of the Way). It is perhaps the only known surviving instruction given to initiates preparing for the final resurrection rite. Any individual who embodies this constitution comes to embody the Way of the Protector and, if they so choose, they adopt the Way of the Watchtower and become a teacher to incoming flocks of neophytes.

One further piece of information that reveals the original shrine of Ise Jingu to have been a location where the secrets of the Otherworld were taught and practiced concerns Amateru's revelation: namely, that in order to follow the example of an individual who's harmonized the masculine and feminine and become a god, it is necessary to consume *chyomi-kusa,* the "thousand-year plant" that grows on the summit of Mount Fuji, whose roots make one virtually immortal. Maybe the inference is allegorical, that to climb the summit of the holiest mountain in Japan is to seek the Tree of Life, as practitioners of Shinto do to this day. And yet chyomi-kusa follows the pattern of consuming a narcotic from a special plant during initiation, like the soma and haoma plants of Vedic and Persian initiation, both of which also grow on high mountains and are said to be inedible to the ordinary person.

Shrine on Mount Haguro.

It is not known if the name Ise is a transliteration of Isa/Isis, wife of the Egyptian resurrected god-man, however, it is known that priestesses in a nearby temple performed religious ceremonies using a rattle bearing an uncanny resemblance to the sistrum used in similar ceremonies by priestesses of Isis.[29] Certainly the goddess Amaterasu, whose essence is the foundation of Ise, shares many common traits with her Egyptian counterpart: she is married to a husband-brother; they represent the cosmic marriage; her brother goes on a rampage that nearly undoes her life, not unlike the murderous Set in the Egyptian myth; she is the repository of divine wisdom; and she also oversees a yearly inundation that brings fertility to the land; in Japan this being brings the rains, guaranteeing a successful harvest of rice.

CHINA

To this very day the sacred Mount Omei and its seventy-two monasteries and shrines still attract two million pilgrims each year. Like a mirage from a distant epoch, you can see Buddhist Pure Land practitioners chanting the *nianfo* mantra for two hours as a trance tool for achieving their aspiration to be "reborn in the pure land"—the Buddhist interpretation of paradise, also known in Sanskrit as *sukhavati* (utmost joy). The ritual serves to purify thoughts and bring mental clarity so as to allow for true understanding of the sacred knowledge, a prerequisite for the pilgrim's reemergence in the Otherworld.[30] This religious ritual was often seen as a way for lay people not associated with a monastic system to get a taste of the Otherworld, an expedient method for glimpsing paradise, implying a deeper ritual was reserved for those who joined the inner groups belonging to the monasteries.

The description of the Otherworld in the sacred text *Sukhavatyamrta-vyuha* is practically identical to other contemporary esoteric philosophies:

> In Sukhavati there is no suffering, and that world is adorned with all kinds of treasure, beautiful lotuses, and wonderful music. . . . This is an exceptional world, especially for the salvation of the unenlightened beings in the period of degeneration [the physical world], who are able to attain the enlightened state in this blessed land. . . . He or she will depart this life with tranquility and be reborn in Sukhavati.[31]

This philosophy, already noted on Mount Omei in AD 400 under the care of the White Lotus Society, may well be an echo of traditions performed by ancient Rishis in 2697 BC. Back then, people undertook pilgrimage to the mountain to "find The Way," one of them being the Chinese emperor Hsuan Yuan.[32] Monks such as Daoist master Zhang, who lived on the slopes of Mount Omei, were called Gentlemen of The Way and practiced meditations at magnetically charged locations such as the Celestial Altar and Celestial Pillar. Their vision quests led to Taiyi, The Way,[33] and on such occasions, practitioners claimed to have observed

luminous beings, much in the same way Native Americans experience Shining Beings during their initiation rituals.

Another of China's sacred mountains, Wu-t'ai, is similarly credited as a place of pilgrimage from where individuals would return enlightened having sought the great bodhisattva Manjushri, the personification of wisdom itself. Wu-t'ai's tradition as a place to awaken the "Great Man within" dates back millennia and served as a beacon for many illustrious Chinese patriarchs in their quest to attain enlightenment. This five-peak mountain is similarly known for its supernatural phenomena, and like China's other eight sacred mountains, many prayer locations coincide with geomagnetic anomalies.

PHOENICIA

Historically, the Phoenician lands bordering the Mediterranean have long experienced a synthesis of Persian and Egyptian influences, the cult of the temple and its associated language notwithstanding. In the third millennium BC Egyptian traders were already traveling to Phoenicia and returning with all manner of goods, particularly cedar. Its oldest town, Byblos, is also one of the oldest in the region; its earliest structures conservatively dated to 8000 BC.

The naming of places or things in the ancient world typically followed the purpose for their existence. Byblos's original name in ancient Phoenician is Geb-el—an approbation of Geb, Egyptian lord of the Earth. Since Geb is derived from *gb,* meaning 'well' or 'origin,' the location can best be described as an 'underground repository that is the source of divinity.' As such, Geb-el reveals much about the purpose of its temples. In one version of the myth of Osiris, the chest containing his body washes up on the seashore at Geb-el, whereupon Osiris is 'grounded' and, thanks to his consort, Isis, and the god of wisdom, Djehuti, he is resurrected.

The reconstitution of Osiris's body and its accompanying ceremony was said to have been solemnized in an underground cave to the north, on the island of Aradus, which at one point was patronized by the pharaoh we met at the beginning of our quest, Thutmosis III (in whose chamber appears the text outlining access into the Otherworld by a living person). On Aradus

there once existed “antiquities of a very extraordinary kind”—a pillared altar and, from the following account, what appears to be an initiatory temple complex:

> About half a mile to the southward of this court are two towers, supposed to be sepulchral monuments, for they stand on an ancient burying place. They are about ten yards distant from each other, one in form of a cylinder, crowned by a multilateral pyramid, thirty-three feet high including its pedestal, which is ten feet high and fifteen square. The other is a long cone, discontinued at about the third part of its height; and instead of ending in a point, wrought into a hemispherical form; it stands upon a pedestal six feet high, and sixteen feet six inches square, adorned at each angle with the figure of a lion in a sitting posture. Underground there are square chambers of convenient height for a man, and long cells branching out from them, variously disposed and of different lengths. . . . These subterraneous chambers and cells are cut out of the hard rock.[34]

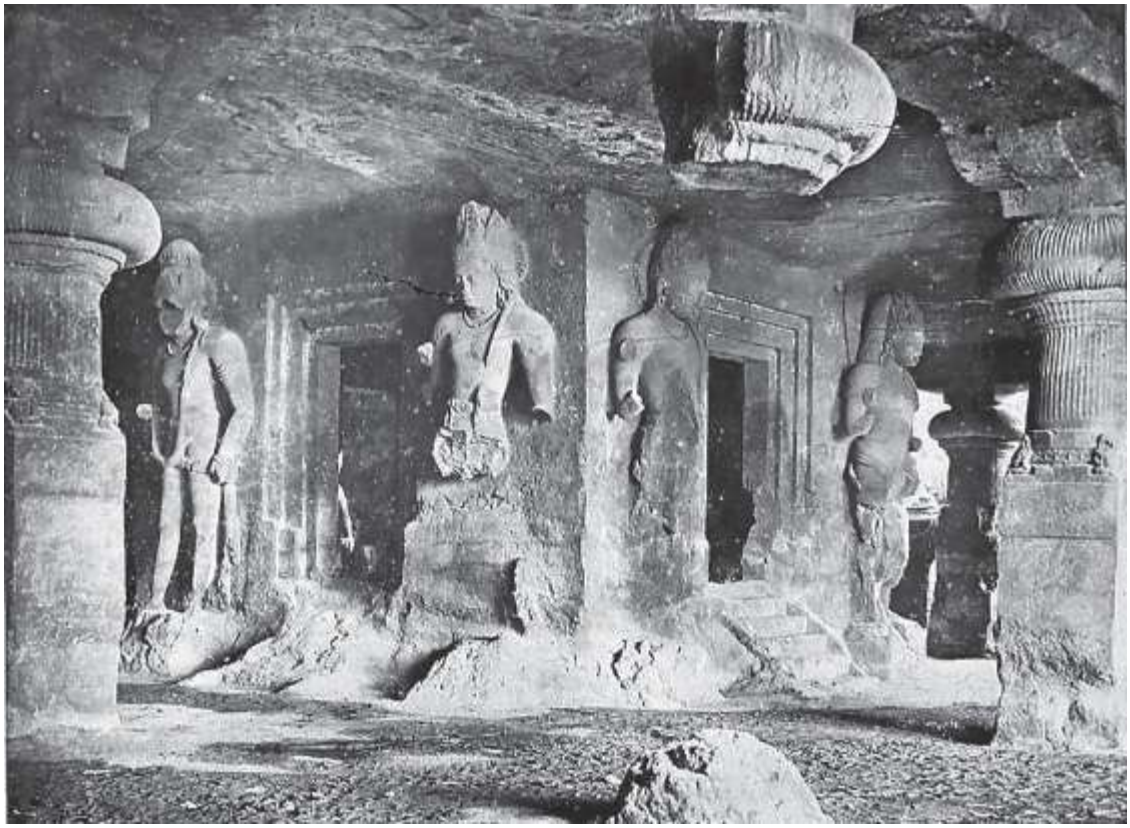
INDIA

On a promontory in Mumbai Harbor there stands an arresting hill inside which lies a network of sculpted caves. Named Gharapuri (city of caves), the enterprise is impressive for one very notable reason: the rock-cut architecture has been hewn from solid, hard basalt. Obviously the location was of critical importance because the workers could have worked the nearby seams of sandstone and saved themselves a huge amount of time and inconvenience. But they were adamant on this exact spot and proceeded to chip away the stone to create two groups of caves: one containing sculptures of the Hindu god Siva hewn from the living rock, the other dedicated to Buddhism.

Pandava, the hero of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata,* and Banasura, the demon devotee of Siva, are both credited with building this temple so that their essence may continue to live inside. But what is also notable about the cave temple of Gharapuri is the sculpted likeness of a king drawing a sword and surrounded by slaughtered infants—all boys—a scene strangely

reminiscent of that described in the biblical story of Herod, and yet the Hindu version is nine hundred years older.[35]

In times gone by, the Gentoo used this sacred place as an initiatory temple for the purification of their sins, entering the narrow cavity from below, "too narrow for persons of any corpulence to squeeze through."[36] Thus the candidates transmigrated from this world into the womb of the Earth mother, cocooned themselves under the gaze of Siva—god of regeneration and rebirth—and three days later reemerged metamorphosed from an opening above the rock-cut temple.



Rock-cut chambers. Gharapuri (now Elephanta).

A similar rock-cut temple exists to the northeast at Mathura, in the shape of a cross, this time dedicated to Siva's peer, Krishna.

PERU

Long before the relatively late Inca arrived in the ancient city of Cusco during the thirteenth century, a local temple called Q'inqu was already established as one of the most important spiritual places in the region, a ceremonial center featuring a natural monolith resembling a phallic lingam connected to an eroded andesite butte carved inside and out with ledges, passageways, hidden niches, stairs that lead nowhere, and a ritual chamber dedicated to an earth goddess. It is a perfect representation of the divine marriage carved from natural stone. Its forecourt is designed in the shape of a curve made from interlocking and meticulously dressed blocks divided into seventeen alcoves.

Its Quechua name means 'zig-zag,' a reference to a meandering pattern neatly incised into the bedrock that connects to a libation bowl at either end. The same pattern is found at sacred places throughout the world and identifies them as locations where the Earth's natural energy pathways congregate, and where people undertook out-of-body journeys.

Q'inqu's underground chamber is accessed by a narrow passage deliberately fashioned out of solid rock to face the equinox sunset, the direction of ritual descent into the Otherworld. The passage meanders like an *S* into an extraordinary space, the hard andesite skillfully sculpted into a series of perfectly flat and polished ledges where one could spend a very comfortable night immersed in a womb-like setting. Its dominant feature is a five-foot-tall altar ledge painstakingly separated from the bedrock to make a freestanding structure.

The passage then bends once more, enabling a person to exit eastward and onto a bowl-shaped courtyard, whose bedrock has been cut deliberately and painstakingly into a vertical wall at a compass angle that accurately references the heliacal rising of Venus at the autumn equinox; the southern section of the courtyard, although now in ruins, allows a view of Sirius at the summer solstice. Venus, like Sirius, was considered by numerous cultures as a star of wisdom, and specifically, as the morning star that brings periodic renewal. Not surprising, then, that Q'inqu was regarded locally as the entrance into the Otherworld.

Venus and the sun are seen rising together again three months later at the winter solstice, this time at Saqsayhuaman, an impressive megalithic complex spread across fifty acres. It is a short walk from Q'inqu along an

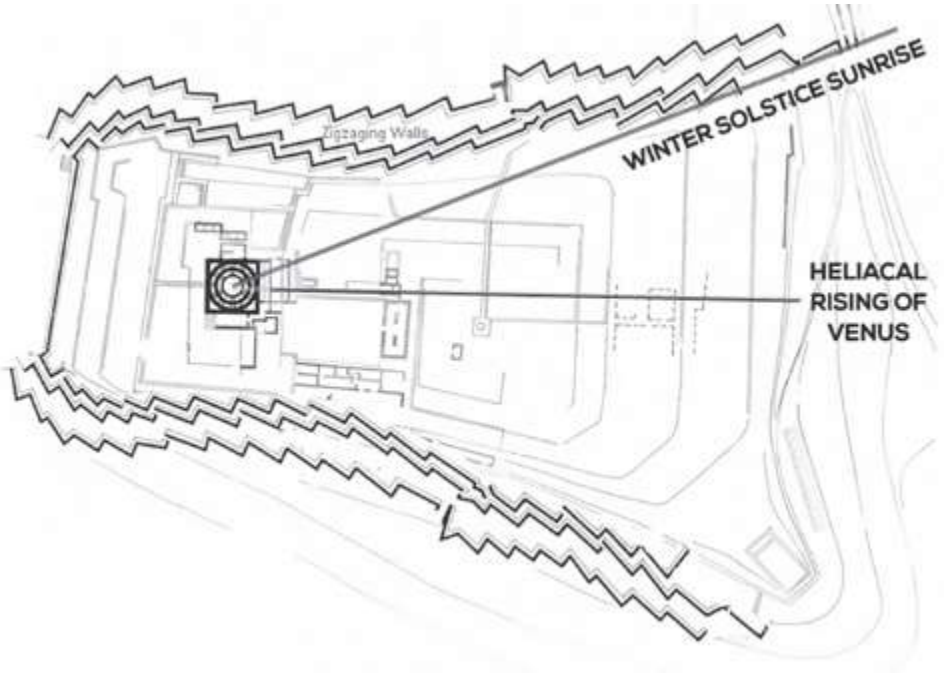
old ceremonial route, and given their shared astronomical connections it is highly likely both sites once formed part of a ritual whole.

Ritual chamber hewn out of the living rock. Q'inqu, Peru.

Saqsayhuaman's unique feature is its serrated megalithic walls. Before the conquistadores plundered one side of the compound for building material, this unique construction, when observed from the air, took on the appearance of a bird's wings, more so given that the site's name in Quechua means 'the place of the satisfied falcon.' Although this bird receives scant attention in Andean mythology, the symbolism would make a visiting ancient Egyptian feel very much at home, where the falcon was revered as both Seker and Horus—the former as god of rebirth, and the latter as the symbolic continuation of the resurrected Osiris, whose rituals were enacted and consummated on the equinox and solstice.

The axis along the raised section of Saqsayhuaman aligns to the heliacal rising of Sirius on June 21 (winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere), while the extreme edge of its northern wall marks the solstice sunrise. Inversely, on December 23, it is Venus that rises along its axis just

before sunrise, a phenomenon that recurs every eight years, making this a perfect spot for celebrating the resurrected hero and the rise of wisdom.



Saqsayhuaman and its alignments.

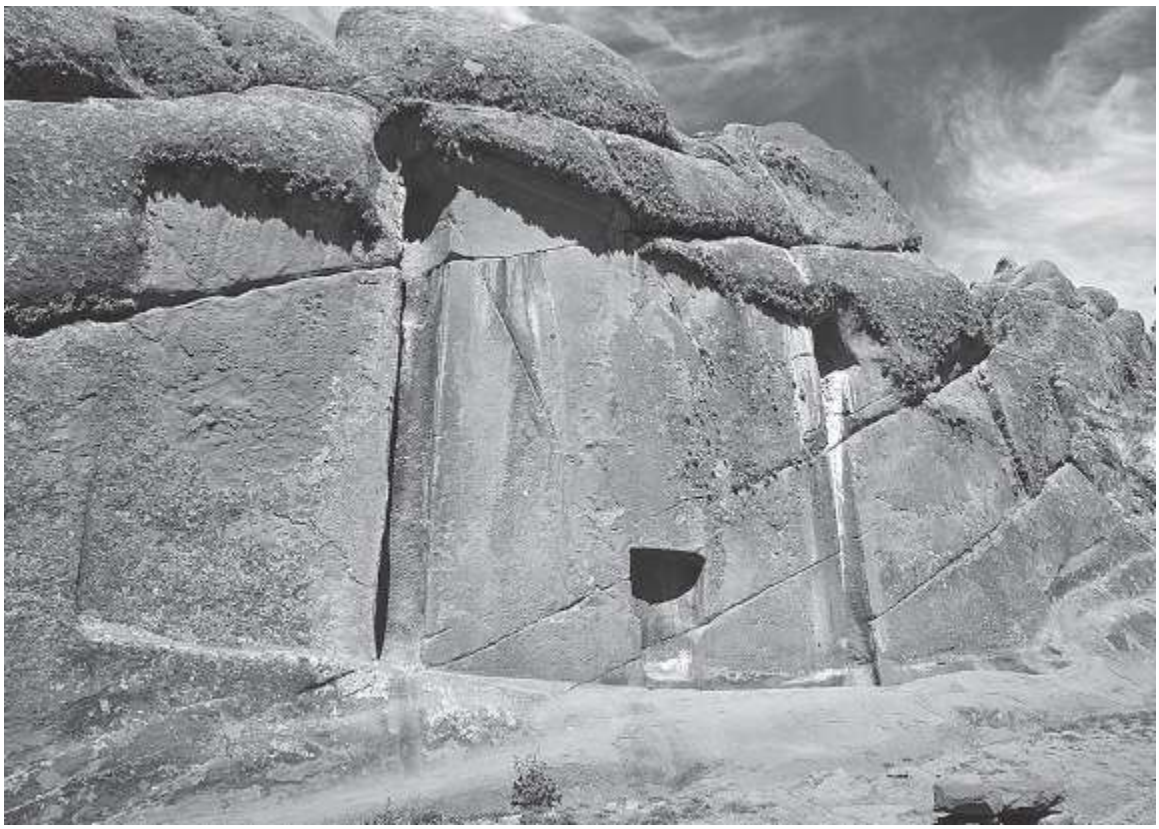
A 250-mile bus ride southeast of Cusco brings you to another natural feature partly reshaped by human hands, a sandstone massif on the edge of Lake Titicaca. Once when the water level of this inland sea surrounded it, the hill was an island resembling a teardrop. The tectonic shifts that plague this region have tilted its bedrock a full ninety degrees, leaving the red stone exposed to the elements so that from the air it resembles a band of razor blades. The hill is called Hayu Marca, literally City of the Spirits, and along its facade long ago, nameless people carved a monumental portal and called it Amaru Muru. A hollow niche at the base is tall enough to accommodate a person of average height.

The work bears a passing resemblance to Egyptian spirit or false doors (which we'll come to later). Indeed the oldest legend describes this as "a doorway to the lands of the gods," and holds that in times long past great heroes passed through this gate for a glorious new life of immortality in the Otherworld. The doorway faces east and the rising sun at the equinox.

Amaru means ‘serpent’ in Quechua, and as with similar locations, the title identifies the site as a conduit for the Earth’s energy currents, which, together with the high content of iron oxide already present in the rock, leaves an indelible impression on anyone who ventures here. The Catholic zealots who conquered this land felt unnerved by it, so much that they called it the Devil’s Doorway; certainly less-attuned locals feel perturbed by this place and often report a blue light emanating from a tunnel inside the rock, or strange people dressed in unusual clothing emerging from it and traveling toward Lake Titicaca. One of the more enduring myths recalls the time of the sinking of the prehistoric continent of Lemuria. One of its seven Great Masters, Aramu Meru, was entrusted with a mission to bring the sacred Golden Solar Disc from the Temple of Illumination to Lake Titicaca for safekeeping. During the time of the Inca the disc was transferred to Cusco, but upon the coming of the Spanish it was returned to Lake Titicaca and placed in the Eternal City inside the lake. There may be something to this because recent archaeological finds eighty feet below the present lake level have revealed evidence of this fabled city.

But the portal into the Otherworld at Amaru Muru is not alone. It shares its design with a twin on the opposite side of the world, at Yazilikaya in Turkey, and comparing the two would lead anyone to believe they were both carved by the same artist. This vertical limestone outcrop has been incorrectly linked as the burial place of Midas, the fabled king who turned everything he touched into gold. However, the king’s body was never found here, and not surprising, given that *mida* is the Phrygian surname of Cybele, a local adaptation of Demeter, the tutelary goddess of the Greek Mysteries school and its related initiation rituals. At such occasions her statue was even placed in the spirit door of this sanctuary. Above it, on the summit, there is a rock-cut altar and accompanying tunnels that lead 900 feet down into the solid rock where secret initiations were conducted.

The same is true of Amaru Muru. There exist vestiges of some kind of rectangular structure on its summit, as well as a tunnel descending into the rock face on the other side of the portal, long since bricked up by the authorities lest anyone should disappear into the bowels of the Earth, because as pre-Inca legends claim, the tunnel extends all the way to Cusco.



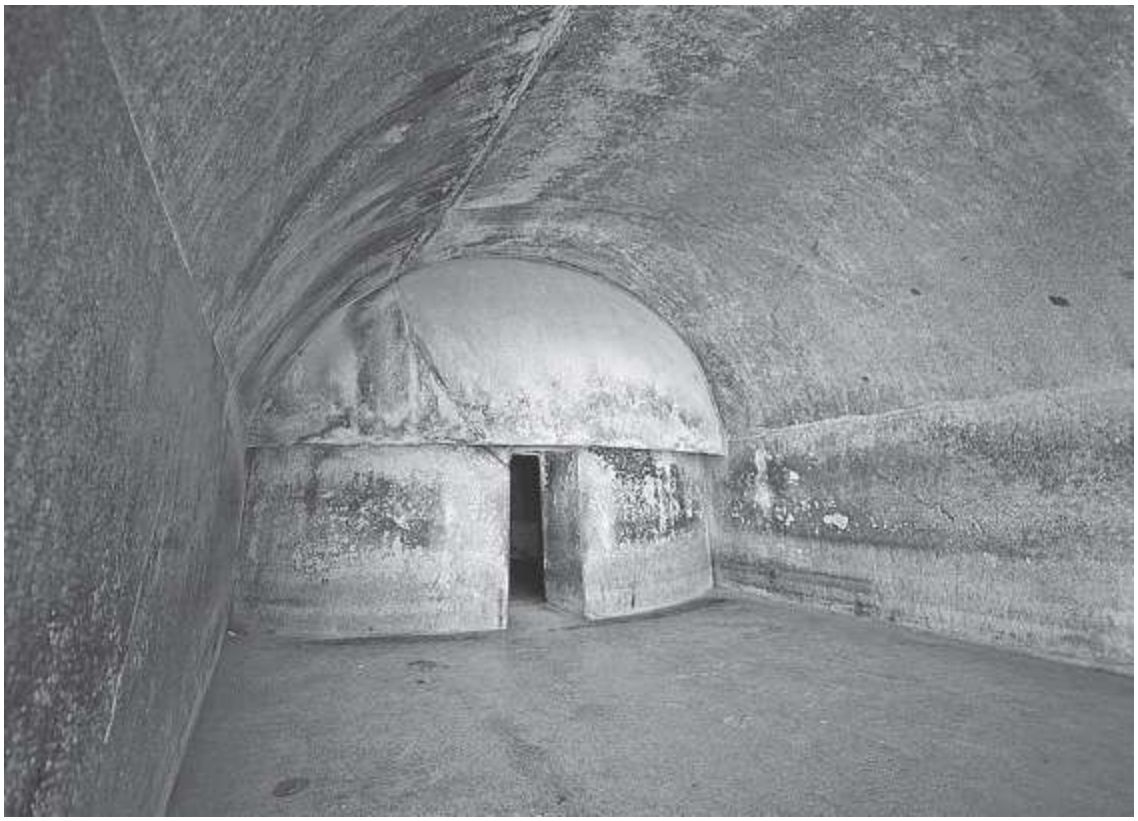
Gates to the Otherworld: Amaru Muru, Peru (top), and Yasilikaya, Turkey (bottom).

So many examples bear common threads illustrating an art of self-realization both pursued and practiced around the world and by individuals who set themselves apart from the rest of society. It also demonstrates that the Knowledge transmitted from group to group shared a common source of now-forgotten origin. In the second millennium BC there were already recurring instances of members of an Egyptian pharaoh's household at Saqqara being favored to join a privileged inner circle to "master secret things of the king." One individual described being led into a restricted chamber to experience a unique ritual, after which he joyfully proclaimed, "I found The Way."

Needless to say, at some point this reached Palestine, because two thousand years later the ritual and its accompanying expression were resurrected by the Jerusalem Church of the early Christians. One woman who was intimately connected with The Way at this time was Mary Magdalene. Her father, Syro, was a Jairus, a high priest, whom Jesus himself raised from the dead.[37] This 'raising' into the degree of community life was part of The Way, and typically administered as a rite of passage at the age of twelve. Mary Magdalene, or more correctly Magdala, is not a name but a distinction. A *Mary* was a woman who was raised in a monastic environment while taking holy orders. Her surname comes from *magdal-elder* and means 'watchtower of the flock,' a position of distinction within a community.[38] Thus Mary Magdala describes a holy woman who is a religious authority (tower) of the community. Following in her father's footsteps, Mary too was inducted in the priesthood and risen from the dead, as confirmed in Mark 5:42 and in Voraigne's *Legenda Aurea,* "And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years."[39]

During this period The Way was a fundamental component of the raising ceremonies of the Essene community of Qumran whose initiates were referred to as "those of The Way." In ancient times Qumran was called Sekhakha. Since the area had previously been under Egyptian rule, it is

possible the name is a variant on Saqqara, the Egyptian temple complex dedicated to Seker, falcon god of the Amdwat.



Lomas Rishi, one of the oldest rock-cut initiation chambers dedicated to Krishna. India.

The Essenes shared many traits with contemporary Gnostic sects such as the Nazoreans, and sufficient evidence shows both groups were one and the same, to the degree that the names were combined as Naassennes;[40] another was the Mandeans—whose name originates from *manda* meaning 'perception knowledge, gnosis'[41]—who to this day in southern Iraq still conduct initiation rituals leading to forms of ecstasy. Their texts state how the methods used to access the Otherworld were once those of Egypt.

The Essenes were said to be "faithful even unto death" rather than give up the secrets of The Way, as though these mystics held a special covenant with God that embodied the spiritual aspirations of all peoples. And they may well have, for the secret books they hid under Temple Mount were said to contain rituals and knowledge "revealed by God," information offering nothing less than Paradise itself.

5

The Otherworld of the Celts

Along with matters relating to the Mysteries, the information that propelled initiates toward the final act of resurrection was considered restricted material. Myths and sagas conveyed kernels of information while parables acted as recruitment tools to bait the curious. But aside from this, the bulk of the Knowledge was transmitted orally by wisdomkeepers from generation to generation. In northern Europe the last people to commit the secret things of the Celts to memory were the Druids, and by then the age of accumulated knowledge was beyond comprehension, much of it having taken place in Neolithic, possibly Mesolithic times. No wonder it took Druid priests up to ten years to learn the Mysteries; their feats of memory astounded even their cynical Roman conquerors.

Entrusting volumes of information to a human encyclopedia may be commendable but it has the drawback of dying with the person maintaining it, and so a forensic investigation of Celtic initiation practices relies on scouring surviving traditions, monuments, and language for clues as to how they might have practiced contact with the Otherworld, particularly how they created the right environment for such a purpose.

The Celts considered the Otherworld to be a location whose time and space differ from the physical world and yet utterly intertwines with it, just occupying a different dimension. For them, physical death is rebirth in the Otherworld, and death in the Otherworld is rebirth into the physical.

In Welsh mythology the Otherworld is called Annwn, also known as Caer Sidi, ‘the castle of the fairies.’ Much like the Egyptian Amdwat, it is described as a world of essential delights. Ingress into this garden of

enchantment is possible through a shamanic initiation while living, and to facilitate it the Celts built countless stone structures with dark inner chambers topped by earthen mounds resembling man-made caves, the most common types being the passage mound and the dolmen. The practice was so pervasive that dolmens are found from Ireland to Libya, and across Asia, with the Korean peninsula boasting the greatest concentration anywhere in the world. Regardless of where these enigmatic structures appear they are united by one element: they all occur along the crossing points of the Earth's electromagnetic currents, so much so that the Celts regarded them as places set aside from the normal world as though protected by a force field.

One of Ireland's earliest mythic races was the Tuadhe d'Anu (people of the goddess Ana) who are said to have brought the Knowledge to ancient Eire. Legends describe them as capable of simultaneously inhabiting the world of the living as well as the discarnate. Their Annwn was regarded as an island in the West, an overseas paradise, a land of gods and nature spirits where the ancestors live immortally in a state of bliss, and into which mortals could be admitted upon gaining the trust of the Tuadhe and being given proper training. Most importantly, the mortals allowed into this spirit realm did so while still alive.

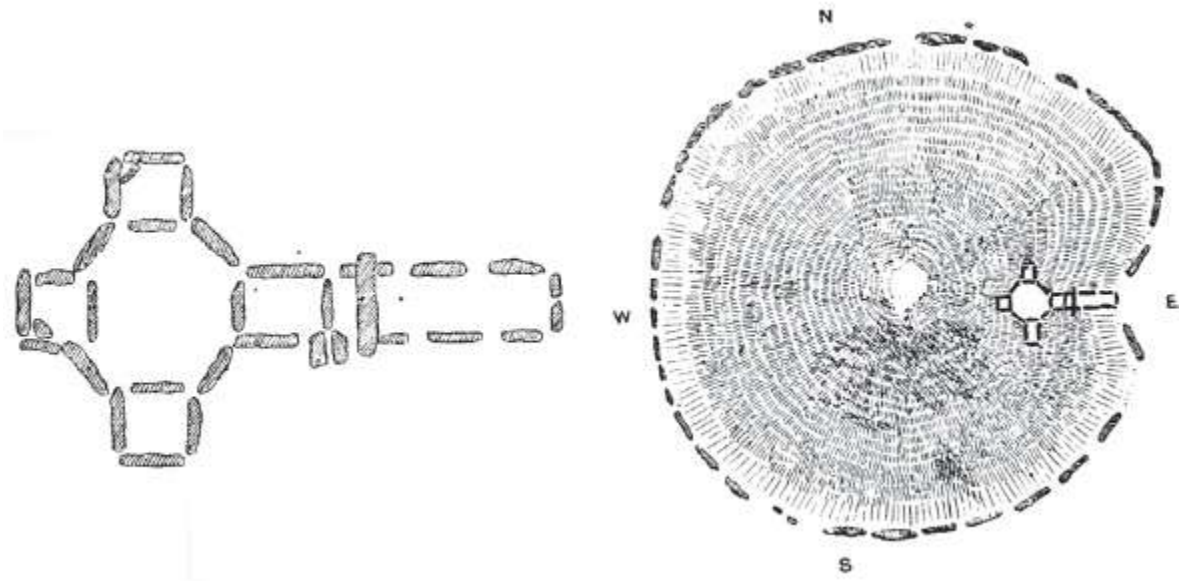
Classic dolmen. Crucuno, Carnac.

This ‘island’ is the same westerly realm to where Egyptian initiates embarked during their initiatory journey, the kingdom the dying sun descends into during its symbolic journey into the night—the shadow world—and both cultures believed this was situated not in some far-off, unknown territory, but close to Earth, merely a whisper away in another dimension.

The Tuadhe are said to continue living in spirit form inside the dolmens, stone circles, and long barrows peppered throughout the Irish countryside. As does the transcendental consciousness, the Sidhe, who, on occasion, presents itself to living people meditating at sacred places. One such temple is the dreamlike stone circle at Uragh, nestled on a glacially sculpted mountainside, overlooking a lake and framed by waterfalls, where the apparition of an extremely tall woman clad in what appears to be light silk often appears to visitors who travel there on spiritual quests. I have had the pleasure of being one such lucky individual.

In central Ireland, the place for connecting with the Otherworld is Sliabh na Caillighe Bheara—the ‘Mountain of the Hag’—otherwise known as Loughcrew. Over fifty ancient places of veneration exist along its flank and summit, including several chambered mounds. The site is named for Bheara, the central goddess of the Celtic creation myth, whose depiction in blue-green makes her the Celtic equivalent of those other gods of regeneration and rebirth, Siva and Osiris.

One of Sliabh na Caillighe Bheara’s most impressive passage mounds leads to a chamber filled with impressive upright stones carved with lozenges, diamonds, waves, and swirls, immediately identifying this as a room once used for visualization. The chamber receives its direct sunlight on two occasions: the sunrise marking Samhain—the day when the veil with the Otherworld is said to be thinnest; and sunrise at Imbolc, the day dedicated to the goddess Brigit, the ‘exalted one,’ daughter of the Tuadhe d’Anu.



Plan of cruciform passage chamber inside the east mound. Sliabh na Caillighe Bheara.

Brigit is the patroness of poetry, medicine, wisdom, knowledge, the arts, and illumination, and since she is also considered a Triple Goddess, all such attributes make her comparable to the Egyptian god of wisdom, Djehuti—the deity who presides at the threshold into the Amdwat. Her totem animals, the serpent and the bee, associate her with precisely the kind of elements involved with initiation: guided energy and divine insight, respectively. But what formally links Brigit—and by extension the chamber at Loughcrew—with the rites of raising the dead is a passage in the *Cath Maige Tuireadh,* a saga of Irish mythology, in which Brigit performs *keening,* an intense mournful wailing after death, for which she is credited with inventing a whistle used for calling out to another person across the reaches of the dark hours so that the traveler may make the journey safely. The metaphors related to night journeying in the Otherworld and the protection afforded by a seasoned guide while doing so are inescapable.

Furthermore, Brigit appears in Celtic lore as Brìghde, the root of *bride,* and it's not by accident that the rooms used specifically for reaching the Otherworld were called bridal chambers, for reasons we shall expand on later.

Twenty-seven miles to the east of Loughcrew lies a group of imposing artificial mounds, the most famous of which is the cardioid-shaped

Newgrange. The name is a corruption of its earlier and more appropriate title, Grain-Uagh, meaning “cave of the sun,” for indeed its long, narrow passageway lined with forty-six impressive upright stones is oriented to the light of the winter solstice sunrise. The moment the sun resurrects out of the darkest night of the year, a shaft of sunlight pierces the innermost chamber to illuminate a series of spirals carved on the stones of an alcove at the rear. But despite its estimated construction date of 3200 BC, Newgrange is a relative newcomer compared to its adjacent sibling, Knowth, which is dated to circa 4885 BC.[1]

Knowth stands apart in many ways, not least because it features not one but two passages. Its straight, westward-facing passage changes course abruptly by 19.4° as though it intends to meet something. Indeed, about twelve feet behind its rear wall lies a central chamber presided by a magnificent corbelled dome made of large flat stones, giving a visitor the impression of standing inside a beehive. In many ways it is a similar design concept to the ancillary chambers inside Egyptian pyramids. Three side chambers complete the design, while a 112-foot-long connecting passage made of tall orthostats leads out to the east. The plan view resembles a crucifix as well as a female womb, implying that whoever is immersed within Knowth is rendered in a state of incubation.

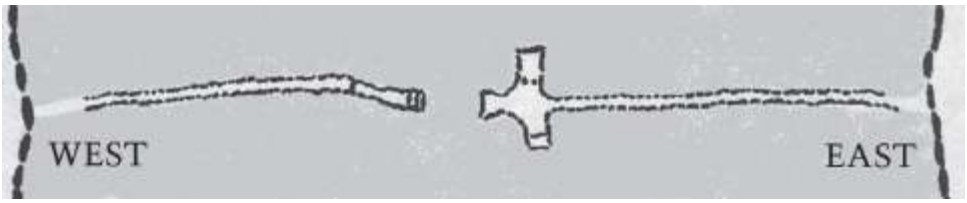
The east-west passages are obviously related. What is not yet known is whether a connecting passage exists between them, but should one be found (the site is still under excavation), the design would conform to the idea of initiates entering through the west door at sunset to immerse themselves in the central chambers, one of which contains a sizeable, decorated stone purposely hollowed so as to be used as a baptismal font. At the close of initiation, exit is made eastward down the long passage and toward the equinox morning light.

Indeed, it is the passages’ astronomical alignment that proves Knowth and adjacent Newgrange once formed part of a ritual whole. The former is aligned to the equinox, the latter to the winter solstice, and both to the heliacal rising of Venus; a carving above the light box in Newgrange even marks Venus’ eight-year transit. Had you lived in 3051 BC you would have observed Venus rising from Knowth on the autumn equinox, and exactly three months later, from Newgrange on the winter solstice.

Venus was the star to whose light initiates were resurrected in Egypt in order to be considered ‘sons of God,’ a position shared by the Jerusalem Church—and quite likely the priests at Saqsayhuaman and Q’inqu, for as we saw earlier, those structures are aligned to the very same heliacal rising of Venus and in that very same year.

The interrelationship between god-man, Venus, equinox, and solstice was commemorated, symbolically at least, in the early Christian era. According to the Bible, John the Baptist was conceived on the autumn equinox and born on the summer solstice, while Jesus was conceived on the spring equinox and born on the winter solstice. The relationship is enshrined in the Master Mason ritual in Scottish Rite Freemasonry, whose traditions commemorate events and rites that took place as much as five thousand years ago.[2] Its 17th degree, the Knight of the East and West—perhaps its most powerful and spiritual—features numerical symbology common to both Knowth and Q’uinqu, as well as the one temple most associated with the resurrection rites of Osiris, the Osirion at Abydos. The Osirion consists of seventeen side chambers, Knowth has seventeen attendant mounds, while Q’uinqu’s preparatory area is a curving wall featuring seventeen alcoves.

Across the Irish Sea in Celtic Scotland there exist ample traditions of sacred places and people crossing into the Otherworld, a number of which are identified with *sorcha* (pronounced “sahkhaa”), an ancient word meaning both ‘paradise’ and ‘illuminated being.’ Once again there is a hint of Egyptian influence, for the syllable *ka* is their word for ‘risen soul or consciousness.’



Plan of the two passages of Knowth.

Main initiatory mound of Knowth and some of its seventeen attendant mounds.

At the core of Scottish Otherworld tradition is a mountain marking the geodetic center of the country, Sidh Chailleann, meaning ‘hill of the Sidhe’ or ‘hill of the Faery Realm.’ On the west shoulder of Schiehallion (as it’s known today), approximately two-thirds of the way up to its pyramidal summit lies a cave the Celts peopled with fairies and goblins, its folklore committed to paper by a local nineteenth-century parish priest:

> There is a very remarkable cave near the south-west angle of Sithchaillinn, at the Shealing, called Tom-a-mhorair [cave of the giant]. Some miles to the east, there is an opening in the face of a rock, which is believed to be the termination thereof. Several stories are told and believed by the credulous, relating to this cave; that the inside thereof is full of chambers or separate apartments, and that, as soon as a person advances a few yards, he comes to a door, which, the moment he enters, closes, as it opened, of its own accord, and prevents his returning.[3]

According to Reverend MacDonald, the stories were related by people who "may be characterized as intellectual, sober, and industrious in their habits, honest and religious."[4]

Schiehallion, the hill of the Sidhe.

The only people known to have frequented this abode of supernatural beings were individuals believed to have been initiated into the secrets of nature, a tradition traced back to an autonomous group of local hermit monks named the Culdee, who once were associated with the early Celtic Church. Formerly known as Chaldeans (from the Aramaic Khalid, 'Friend of God'), they migrated from Asia Minor, and their practices were extensions of Druid, Manichean, and Essene beliefs,[5] all of which shared the same tradition of initiation and living resurrection.

This tradition finds its counterpart on the island of Mull, stepping stone to the sacred isle of Iona. Mull's own venerable holy mountain, Ben Mhor, rises formidably above an unusual feature: an enormous cave with a mouth gaping at the Atlantic and wide enough to swallow the setting sun. MacKinnon's Cave is connected with many eerie legends. Folk tales describe initiates performing rituals there during pagan times on a massive

flat stone called Fingal's Table, which rests in a chamber deep inside this horizontal volcanic tube. Certainly the environs are protected by enough superstition to keep the superficially curious away, in addition to a sea that enters the cave and flows far inland with the rising tide. It is said that the cave's recesses pass right through the mountain to the other side of the island, allowing those so inclined to enter in the west and emerge into the sunrise in the east.

That was then. Today the rear of the cave is blocked by sand and debris, but assuming the legend is true and the natural chasm does run beneath the island—such volcanic features are common in this part of Scotland—an easterly line projected across Mull does arrive at the mouth of Uamh na Nighinn (Cave of the Young Maiden), an unusual name given its isolation from any settlement and accessible only from the sea. Could its given name imply a communion with the divine virgin to whom initiates were wedded? Perhaps. And as if this wasn't coincidence enough, the distance between the two cave mouths is 18.6 miles, the same number in years as the lunar cycle.

That the resurrection Mystery was performed in some fashion in this area may be commemorated in the unusual behavior of Odhràn, a sixth-century Celtic Christian monk who, upon reaching the adjacent island of Iona with St. Columba, rebuilt a ruined chapel previously built by the Culdee. Legend states that the walls of the chapel came down as fast as they went up as though by evil intent; only when a person was buried alive inside would the stones remain upright. Odhràn volunteered for the task, and when the earth was removed three days later, Odhràn raised himself and declared that all that had been said of hell was a joke. Clearly this monk experienced something inside this ancient place of veneration that changed his outlook on the true nature of reality.

The Culdee's alleged arrival in the British Isles circa AD 37[6] is supported by the fact that this small chapel aligns to the simultaneous rising of Venus and the sun on the spring equinox of that year.

Incidentally, the Druids (Gaelic, 'magicians, wise men') were known to have conjured the weather against St. Columba when he tried to boot them and the Culdee out of Iona. Or perhaps the gesture was aimed at Columba's distaste of women, for Iona and Mull point to a tradition of ritual whereby women were very much involved, seeing as a

disproportionate number of churches and monasteries were maintained by female orders, including Eilean nam Bam, the Island of Women, while the Druid and Culdee monks themselves were known to have been married.[7]

To the north of Iona, spread out amid the gales and crashing waves of the northern Atlantic, lies the barren Isle of Lewis and its most alluring feature, the ritual temple of Callanais. Centuries ago one would have been forgiven for not assigning any significance to this site, until six feet of peat cut away for fuel revealed the details of one of the world's most magnificent ceremonial sites.

Callanais is unique insofar as it is a stone circle connected by four avenues of glistening Hebridean gneiss, each aligned to the cardinal points save one, which is notably kinked to the northeast, the direction associated with illumination and ancient wisdom. From the air, the site takes on the appearance of a sprawling crucifix.

Callanais, Isle of Lewis.

Remains of beehive ceremonial cairn inside Callanais.

Ceremonial cairn, Nether Largie. The actual burial chamber is in the foreground.

It is this last detail that may give away one of its original functions. While there is little doubt that the site references significant astronomical events,[8] a superfluous beehive-shaped cairn was added to the center of the circle, under which was unearthed a rectangular underground chamber facing east. There was no trace of burial. However, recent research has brought to light the fact that the anomalous northeast avenue—aside from marking the northernmost risings of the moon and sun—once extended a mile farther and, prior to a devastating rise in sea level around 2200 BC that created the nearby loch, would have concluded at a second cairn, also with an underground chamber facing equinox sunrise. If so, part of Callanais served a ritual function, as though a person was prepared in one cairn, then walked the ceremonial route to be ensconced inside another. Such a speculative scenario would be very familiar to someone visiting from an Egyptian temple, especially Saqqara, for the very same route was taken by candidates there wishing to undergo a ritual journey into the Otherworld, as we shall see later in chapter 13.

As with Egyptologists, archaeologists in Britain also made sweeping generalizations that all mounds were built for funerary purposes, despite only 15 percent of them yielding evidence of deliberate human burial. Such is the case at Nether Largie, a reasonably well-preserved mound in Kilmartin. It is essentially a 130-foot-wide mound featuring a central chamber capable of holding a sizeable group of twelve meditating people very comfortably beneath a damp schist roof. Its acoustics seem purposefully designed to elicit a state of reverie. Not that any sound would wake the dead, for the only sign of burial is the small cyst that lies adjacent to, but separate from the mound.

The examples throughout the British Isles of anomalous ceremonial mounds and chambers are too numerous to list, but one in particular merits attention due to its long association with the Celtic Otherworld—an island of volcanic rock and slate barely tethered to the mainland of Cornwall—Tintagel. It is the quintessential ‘island in the west’ to where the soul migrates in resurrection traditions. Indeed, by its geographic location, at Tintagel one physically prepares to embark on a westward journey into the endless Atlantic horizon. The entire mass even sits on a magnetic anomaly, giving the site a palpable aura of a place set aside from the physical world.

The persistent lashings from the Atlantic’s capricious weather make this place tolerable for seals rather than humans, and indeed the lack of habitation suggests Tintagel island was once a site used for spiritual seclusion, one of its earliest remains being those of Julitta’s chapel, a Celtic oratory from around the fifth century. Discoveries of fine Mediterranean and Tunisian pottery further attest to the island’s importance as a religious sanctuary.

Inside the Nether Largie cairn.

The clue to unlocking Tintagel's secret lies across the way, on the edge of a precipitous mainland cliff, where stands a rare fifth-century church dedicated to Madryn, a Welsh princess said to have birthed a divinely conceived child. The name is most likely a corruption of Mater Ann, the mother of the gods. Beside the church were found slate graves devoid of bodies, but bearing a cache of goods from southeast Turkey. How odd that tomb robbers should have pinched the corpses but left the precious gifts behind. These graves encircle an ancient mound beneath which was found a

large polygonal chamber aligned east-west, featuring a hollowed greenstone used for ritual libations. It too was devoid of burial.

At the center of these anomalous features stands an unusual conical stone cut from mica and marking the edge of one of Europe's most studied pathways of naturally occurring energy, the Morganna line.[9] However, it also doubles as a sighting post used for aligning the Great Bear and the pole star that rise over Tintagel island just before the sun is reborn on the winter solstice. This is very significant because, according to indigenous traditions, souls incarnate from the still point of the sky—the pole star—travel along an invisible tube to Earth, and return through it at death.

Tintagel's further connection with the Otherworld stems from an ancient folktale claiming that the island possesses a faery castle that appears twice a year—once in winter, once in summer—as though Tintagel acts as a gateway to another dimension on two special occasions, such as the solstices.

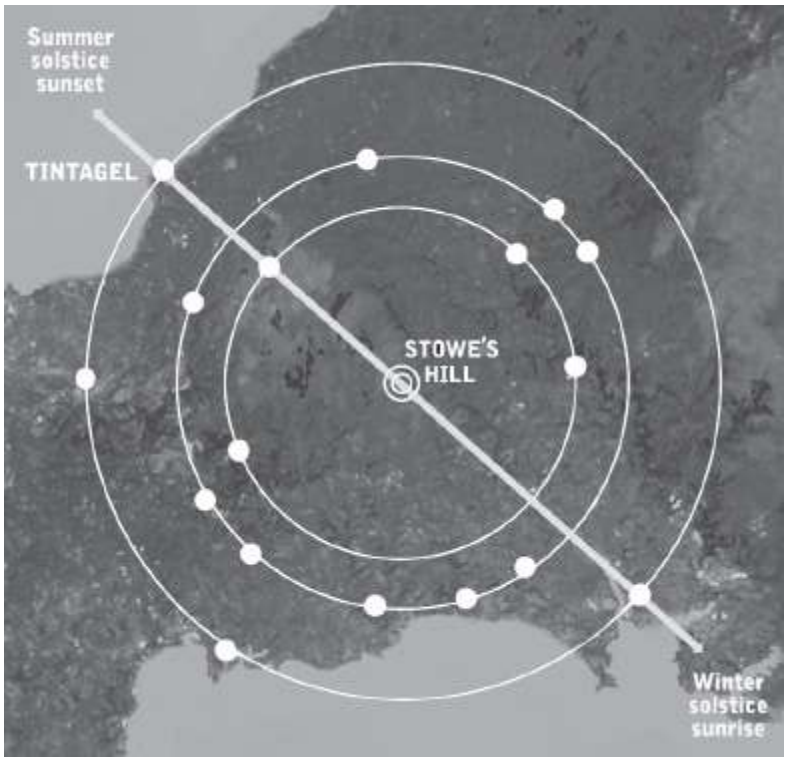
Then there is the association with the Arthurian myth. Although Tintagel's connection to Arthur and the Grail is a recent popularization by the poet Tennyson, the story is an adaptation of the Egyptian resurrection myth, with Arthur playing the role of Osiris, his evil brother Mordred as Seth, and Merlin as Djehuti, god of wisdom. It is also a remake of the earlier Celtic legend of Tristan and Isolde, a veiled story of a hero's perilous journey to wed his divine virgin.

Arthur appears to be a composite fifth-century king, part real, part myth; it may not even have been a real name but a title, given that Arth Fawr is Welsh for Great Bear, the constellation bearing the pole star in his time. Like Heracles and his twelve labors, the twelve-part Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the trials of the Nordic Ar-Thor, or the journey of the Greek Odysseus, Arthur represents the hero on a spiritual quest. Like other god-men, his birth to a virgin queen is magically conceived, while his battles resemble stages of initiation into the Mysteries. His court, Camelot, is derived from the local river Camel, whose original name was Cam-Alan.

In the myth Arthur marries a beautiful maiden who brings to him a round table as part of her dowry. Its twelve stages are linked to the twelve battles in his quest, and yet its overtones are analogous to the passage of the sun through the houses of the zodiac. And if so, the story starts to resemble a portrayal of the cycle of life and rebirth, least of all because it is rich in

allegorical references of transcending ordinary consciousness through a journey into a mystical land. The experience is what empowers the hero to overcome a fatal wound and return to raise his kingdom from catastrophe.

The Welsh *Mabinogion* describes how Arthur and companions sail across the water to islands in the Otherworld in search of a magic cauldron. Tintagel may very well be one such island, along with a goodly number of sacred places throughout Cornwall associated with Arthur. Assuming the folk tale commemorating the solstices is correct, a line drawn through Tintagel in the direction of the rising sun on December 21 connects to Stowe's Hill, a ritual site of extreme importance in the center of Cornwall (*stowe* means 'sacred site' in Saxon). From this focal point spokes of an invisible wheel radiate outward, revealing a geodetic round table of temples. Tintagel marks the northwest quadrant[10]—the traditional position on the Celtic Wheel of Life allocated to the spirit world, marked by the festival of Samhain, and now Christianized as All Hallows Eve.



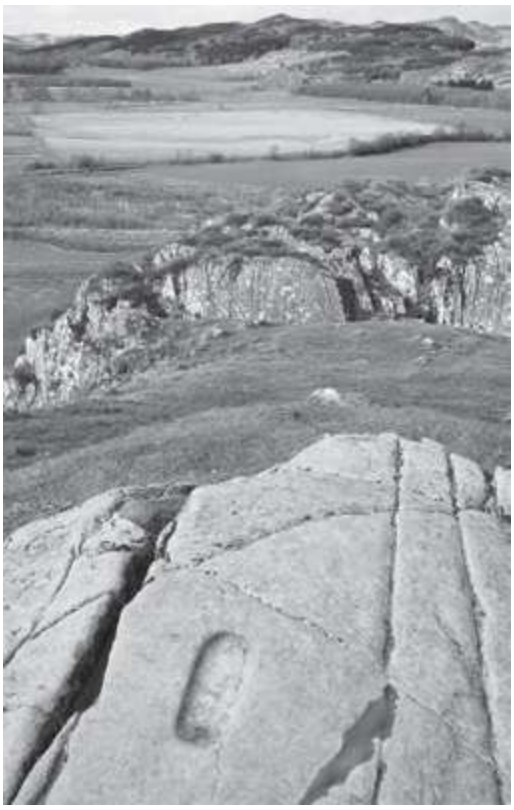
Tintagel and the round table of sacred sites.

Along this alignment on the summit of Tintagel lies Arthur's footprint carved into the living stone, through which passes the Morganna line as it makes a beeline to Madryn church and the winter solstice. The footprint marks the spot for resurrecting the power of the ruler, his or her divine kingship consecrated the moment the sun rises above the horizon. An identical mark exists on the sacred hill Dunadd near Kilmartin, where divine kings from the line of David were similarly consecrated. It too is aligned to the winter solstice sunrise, as well as the highest position of the light, the summer solstice sunrise.

Vestiges of this resurrection ritual lie a few yards from Arthur's footprint: a *fougou,* a hand-cut tunnel that once held a pool of water at its western opening, which may have served a baptismal function. Just like the Otherworld chamber at Q'inqu, the tunnel has been cut like an S curve for no apparent practical reason, until it was discovered to mark the path of the Morganna line.[11] Like so many of its kind, entrances reference the equinox sunrise and sunset, respectively, allowing the candidate to enter through the west, be ritually baptized, become immersed in the womb for three days before emerging into the rising light, and be resurrected into the world of the living.

Fifth-century Britain was a busy time for mystics, priests, and hermits. Many, like Telo, Cado, Piran, and the Irish princess Ia, traveled from Ireland and Wales to Devon and Cornwall, even the coast of Brittany, in what appears to have been a concentrated effort to counteract the false Christian doctrine then spreading across Europe.

The solar king's footstep (foreground) with Madryn church across on the mainland (above). And the king's footprint at Dunadd (below).



The ritual chamber or fougou on Tintagel.

Another such itinerant monk was Neachtan, and part of a valley dedicated to him lies two miles from Tintagel. Local folk tales persist of pilgrims traveling to Rocky Valley seeking the path of enlightenment. There are distant legends of knights associated with a Round Table, and later, Templar knights made it a point of journeying here as part of a spiritual curriculum to prepare themselves for that most arduous of journeys, the path of self-discovery and spiritual resurrection.

The path in and out of the valley takes on the vague form of the Egyptian symbol of life everlasting, the *ankh,* the head of which lies in the east, marked by an ancient hermitage said to have once been occupied by Neachtan himself. The tiny cell, built out of local slate and still in existence today, was expanded in the nineteenth century into a modest stone cottage. Beside it flows a stream that plunges sixty feet to become a dramatic waterfall.

So far so good. But the story takes an unusual turn because the only known human iteration of this name, St. Nectan, whose religious calling was shaped by a passion to imitate the way pursued by a hermit of the Egyptian desert, lived twenty-eight miles away to the north in Hartland. So are we dealing with the same person or is the name commemorating a curious purpose behind the valley?

Tales describe initiates spending long periods of time immersed in the intimacy of the hermit's cell, then walking out to a ledge halfway up the waterfall to jump into a deep *kieve,* or basin, before passing through a dramatic circular hole in the rock face to emerge newborn out of the waterfall. To this baptismal pool is connected a ritual path straddling the river, ending a mile away at what appears to be a vertical chamber, hand cut from the black slate cliffs at the point where the sweet waters merge with the sea.

The whole forms what is essentially a ritual landscape temple.

As we learned earlier, the initiatory path to spiritual resurrection requires the body's energy field to be open to finer, more penetrating stimuli, and indeed one does get a sense that during a peregrination along Rocky Valley the body is being stimulated. The fact that another well-studied telluric current—the Merlin line—also flows through the hermitage

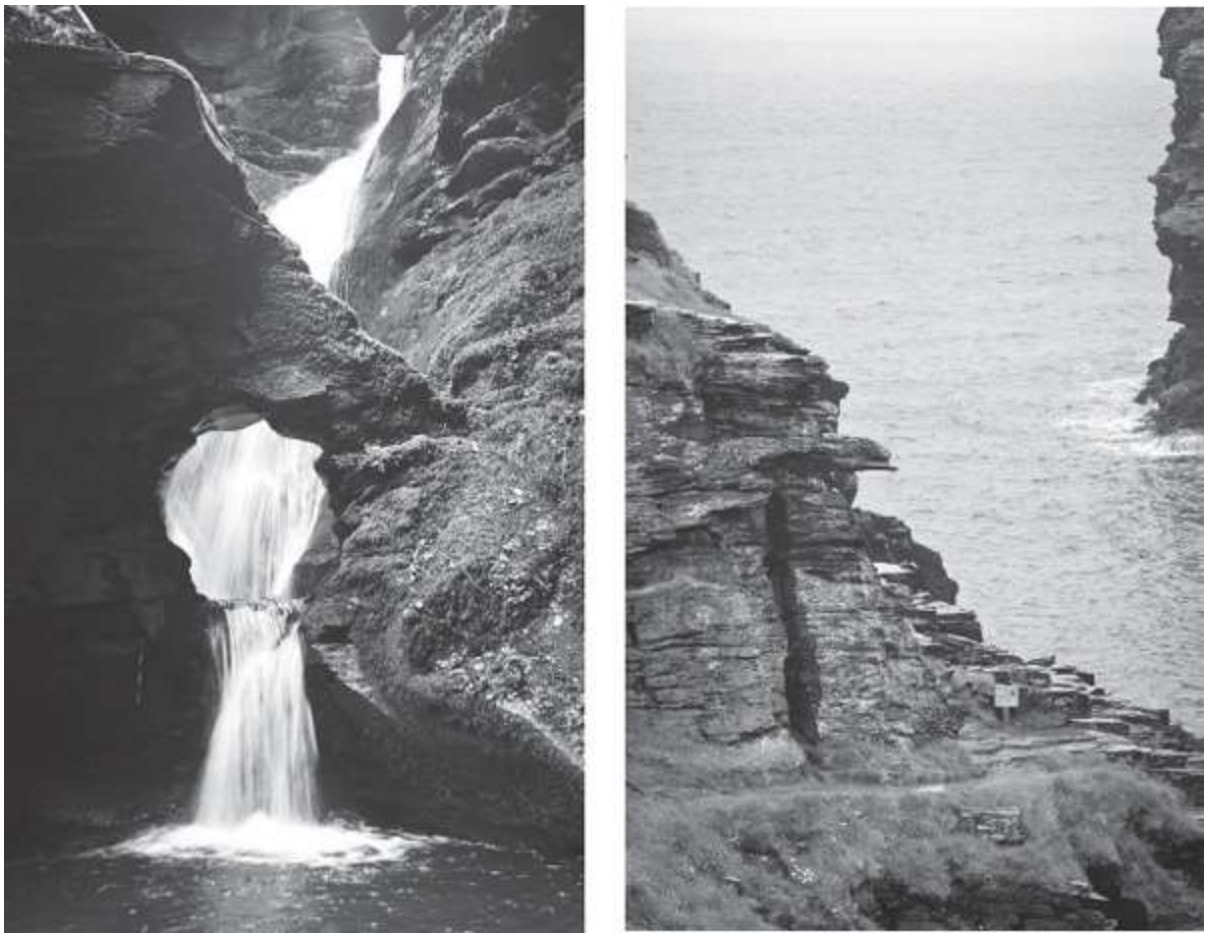
and the kieve only adds to the palpable energy. If the valley were a mirror of the human body and its chakras, the only bridge that straddles it would mark the location of the heart, and traditionally, unless one is able to open the heart, the rest of the journey is futile. Coincidentally this bridge bisects the valley into two halves that feel very different yet complementary to one another. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why the religious chose the site, insofar as it forms a material counterpart to the accounts from initiates undertaking an out-of-body experience who describe crossing a bridge over dark matter before reaching an entirely different, paradisiacal landscape.

Farther along Rocky Valley, in what would be the equivalent of the third-eye chakra, two labyrinths have been carved upon the slate rock face, each estimated to be over 4,500 years old. These coincide with the flow of another well-documented energy pathway, the Morganna line.[12] Beside these carvings is a small enclosure in the rock face barely large enough to accommodate a person in fetal position, yet reportedly used for meditation.

The crown chakra is marked farther along the path by the aforementioned vertical chamber at the mouth of the river, where the view expands dramatically to embrace the western horizon.

Folk tale, figment of the imagination, or fact, the truth is that a hermit's body was found buried inside a hollowed oak at the base of the kieve, a ritual of obvious Druidic origin and thereby predating the historical St. Nectan.

Neachtan, on the other hand, is the name of the lord who presides over the Celtic Otherworld.



Neachtan's kieve. And right, the chamber at the end of the trail.

6

Secrets of the Beehive

A recurring characteristic of Celtic ritual chambers is the fitting of interior roofing stones to simulate a beehive, Newgrange being a particularly well-preserved example. As is the east-facing passage mound of Kercado, one of the innumerable components that compose the ritual landscape of Carnac, and at circa 5000 BC, one of the oldest known passage mounds in Europe. Its inner stones are etched with the familiar checkerboard pattern symbolizing the interplay between dark and light that characterizes the causal forces in this world and the next. This universal law was originally encapsulated in the ancient Chinese board game of Siang k'i, which itself has strong associations with divination and astrology. On its slow migration westward the game was resurrected by Islamic intellectuals with the name it is known by today—chess.

To all intents and purposes the game is analogous to a Mysteries play. The movement of each piece represents the eternal struggle between the antagonistic forces of ignorance and knowledge. Some of its adherents even played the game blindfolded to demonstrate the extraordinary capabilities of a fully engaged soul. The checkerboard was adopted by the Knights Templar as the representative difference between the unconscious and the risen, and subsequently by their progeny the Freemasons, who to this day incorporate the concept in their 3rd-degree initiation ritual: the removal of the blindfold from the candidate after he or she is raised from a figurative grave and declared 'risen.'

Traditionally, the trajectory of the soul into the Otherworld is westward along the sun's bridle path of descent into the darkness of the

primordial ocean. Looking westward out to sea from the coast of Ireland, the last bastion of solid form before the mutable horizon is Skellig Michael, a peak of natural basalt that thrusts skyward out of the Atlantic like a black pyramid.

A walk . . . no, a suicidal trek up its vertiginous path to the summit rewards the survivor with the magnificent sight of six *clocháins*—stone beehive chambers. Besieged by utter tranquility, this loneliest of human outposts is devoid of all material distraction as though deliberately sculpted for pilgrims wishing to contemplate the world beyond the physical. In the sixth century the site functioned as a hive for monks escaping the temporal world to engage in meditation and solitary spiritual concerns. Only the distant Irish shore beckoned their return upon resurrection from their inner expeditions.

Skellig Michael. On a calm day.

Beehive chamber, Skellig Michael.

These stone cocoons would not have seemed strange to the Yaqui and Seri tribes who lived near the border of Sinaloa, Mexico. In 1947 a cave was discovered in the nearby mountains at an altitude of 7,000 feet, filled with huts shaped like beehives. The natives had almost vanished by that time, as had the people who once built this secluded paradise. But the beehive huts contained the mummies of giants up to nine feet in height, wrapped in saffron-colored robes, upon which were painted blue pyramid emblems with dots. The locals claimed they belonged to a race that originated from a land submerged long ago.[1]

During a trip to South America I was surprised to find the beehive chamber was also used in this part of the world, and quite possibly for identical rituals. In Peru, whenever one is offered the explanation of a sacred site as pre-Inca, it is archaeological speak for "we have no bloody idea who built it," which essentially applies to most Andean prehistory.

Such is the case with the tall, pre-Inca towers known as *chullpas* that grace the flat buttes at Cutimbo and Silustani.

The Inca were not a particularly dab hand at large masonry, particularly the megalithic sort, as proved when 20,000 men attempted to haul a gargantuan stone at the temple of Ollayantambo, only for 3,000 of them to be crushed to death when the ropes failed.

The chullpas are also built with massive curved stones, fitted together tongue-and-groove style, and so tightly arranged that an alpaca hair cannot be inserted between them. No mortar was ever used. Later towers are fitted to a similar high standard, tapered, and finished in more linear fashion as though by a cosmic draftsman.

Chullpa at Cutimbo, Peru.

The structures are referred to as *uta amaya* (houses of the soul). Notice *of* the soul and not *for* the soul, a seemingly innocuous difference yet a major one, because it indicates their original purpose was not for burial—

the orthodox excuse—but as places of facilitation. Even the sixteenth-century chronicler Pedro Cieza de Leon, who was himself half Inca and half Spanish, suspected that the enigmatic towers may have been reused for burial during Incan times but originally served a ritual purpose.

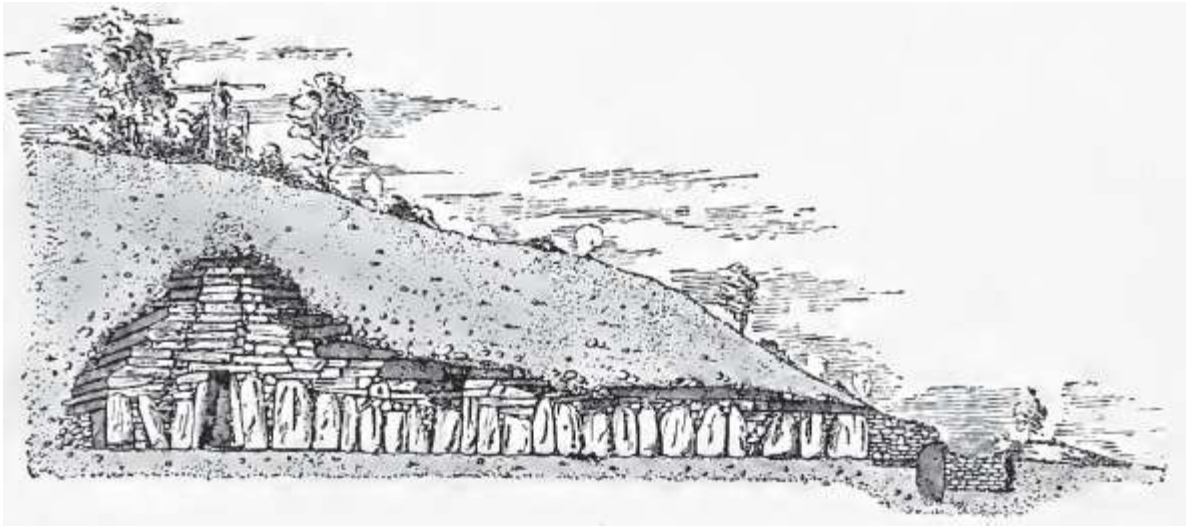
He may have been right. One of the towers had its face blown out, thankfully revealing how the core masonry was designed in the shape of a beehive. There is only one way in, through a tiny rectangular hole, forcing even the smallest of people to scramble on all fours, as though made to enter and exit the structure in a state of humility—one of the prerequisites for ritual initiation. And just to make the case, every entrance on every chullpa is oriented precisely east. If you happen to be at the main chullpa in Cutimbo around midday, with the sun at its zenith, something very wondrous occurs: the light cast upon the stones reveals relief carvings above the doorway of what appear to be a male and a female figure, the symbolic coupling of the initiate with the bride. Possibly. The figures are weathered. However, there also come into view the reliefs of two large dogs, which at first glance seems an unusual choice of creature to etch at the entrance to a ritual chamber—unless you understand the Aymara religious system, which taught that a soul experiencing resurrection undergoes an ordeal while finding its way to the Otherworld. The Andean account of this afterlife journey uses the symbol of a bridge across a raging river, and as the soul crosses the river it is assisted by black dogs capable of seeing in the dark—much like the hounds of Hades of the Greeks, the Cŵn Annwn escort dogs of souls in the Welsh Otherworld, and Anubis and Upauat of the Egyptians.

Canine and bride reliefs.

Such beehive chambers exemplify a long tradition of association with the bee. Since the bee and the honeycomb effortlessly characterize the manifestation of divine harmony in nature, bees were considered a link between life and afterlife. Nature gods such as Vishnu, Pan, and Aphrodite are depicted as honeybees on a flower, while in the Egyptian creation myth, the sun god Ra cries tears of honey that transform into honeybees the moment they touch the earth. Priestesses honoring the cults of fertility such as those of Ceres and Demeter were nicknamed bees, as were the women who assisted candidates undergoing initiation in secret chambers.

The honeycomb was similarly linked with personal insight and divine wisdom, a concept immortalized in the Bible: “Jonathan . . . put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.”[2] The theme was picked up by those keen observers of the Mysteries secrets, the ancient Greeks, with Sophocles describing how souls are carried through into the Otherworld as a swarm of bees: “Up [from the Otherworld] comes the swarm of the souls, loudly humming.”

Where passage mounds feature flat-roofed chambers, one is shaped as a beehive, indicating the design didn't just serve a structural purpose. Achnacree, Scotland.



Beehive chamber and passage. Newgrange, Ireland.

In Ireland, bees were religiously revered because they produce honey, the principal ingredient of mead, the drink of immortality that flows in the Otherworld (hopefully in everlasting quantities). The fact notwithstanding that bees hibernate for three months before reemerging, such attributes explain why the industrious little insects are depicted on ancient tombs as symbols of resurrection and the Otherworld. On occasion, honeycombs also appear inside subterranean chambers, and in doing so reveal the true purpose behind such curious compartments.

The island of Malta takes its name from the Phoenician *maleth,* meaning 'haven,' and later *melita,* or honey. Obviously this does not immediately qualify the island as a haven of the Otherworld, after all, Malta is known for an endemic species of bee that thrives on this tiny jewel in the Mediterranean and produces a fair supply of the golden sticky stuff.

However, Malta's unusual temples—forty of them on a speck of limestone no more than sixteen miles by eight—do.

Malta's cyclopean temple architecture appeared out of nowhere, completely developed without precedent by 3200 BC, and on too small a footprint to have sustained the earliest architectural civilization. In short, its civilization territory is missing. With trefoil designs giving them the appearance of wombs, and originally capped with beehive domes, nothing looks like them. Such three-chamber designs are proven to be astronomically significant, yet like most temples, they served multifunctional purposes. From the initiatic point of view, each chamber was used to teach an understanding relating to creation, body, and spirit, and their relative correspondence to Under-, Middle-, and Otherworlds. The chambers were either adjoined or ascended in floors, and as the neophyte moved from vaulted room to vaulted room, to them would be revealed secrets of self-mastery en route to a revelation of inner perception.

When the Maltese temples were originally excavated, they were found covered in a three-foot-deep layer of sterile soil, as though the entire island was once subjected to a titanic tsunami that deposited thousands of people and animals unceremoniously into every available sinkhole, bringing to an end all human and temple activity. A new culture emerged hundreds of years later and rebuilt on top.

In 15,000 BC, however, it was a most desirable place to live, connected as it was by a land bridge to Sicily, the warmest part of a continent mostly covered by ice sheets three miles thick. That all changed three thousand years later. The land bridge collapsed, sea levels rose sixty feet, Malta suffered a violent loss of land, and all that remains are the four chunks of archipelago we see today.

Malta's oldest temple rests on the bedrock of its smaller adjacent island, Gozo. Folklore maintains it was built by a giantess by the name of Sansuna whose ability to carry large stones was attributed to her vegetarian diet, which, although admirable, may be an ancient echo of the earliest cult of Demeter, the goddess of grain, and its connection with the hallucinogenic fungus ergot. Called Ggantija (tower of the giants), it is one of the oldest freestanding structures in the world, erected a thousand years before the last phase of the Great Pyramid in Giza and Sumeria's mud-brick temples, apparently by people with no accumulated knowledge of building

sophisticated structures, and on an archipelago said to have been largely uninhabited.

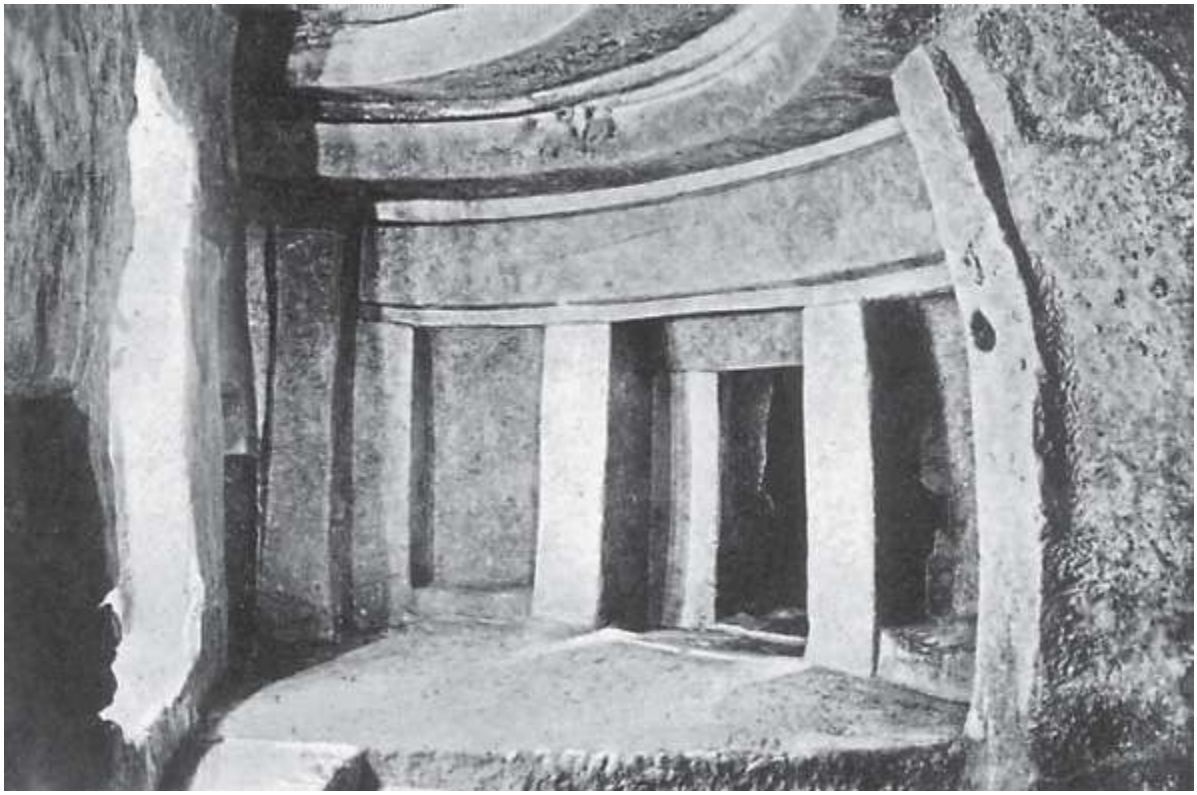
Womblike design of the double temple of Ggantija, originally covered with a beehive roof.

Ggantija is officially dated to circa 3200 BC so as to shoehorn it within an academically acceptable time frame. And this is where the problems begin. The oldest, and biggest, stones—some weighing sixty tons—show signs of extreme water erosion on an island that last experienced a substantially wetter climate closer to 8000 BC, with the Sahara to the south sharing the same climatic footprint.

Then there is the issue of archaeological evidence of local human habitation and cave art dating to the Paleolithic, along with remains of animals that were last seen at the end of the ice age, stranded in Malta following the collapse of the land bridge.

Ggantija's other anomaly is that it is a double temple; it is paired with an adjacent subterranean structure. And here begins the association with the Otherworld and the ritual of living resurrection. Of Malta's forty known temples, barely twenty-three survive, most of them lying in desperate states of repair. Many feature satellite underground chambers, also in various stages of abandonment. But in 1902, workers digging a cistern accidentally broke through the ceiling of a complex and well-preserved subterranean

ritual temple that became known as the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni, which may have served as the underground component of the nearby temple of Tarxien. The limestone bedrock hasn't just been cut into spacious passages, but also hollowed into thirty-three contiguous halls and chambers on three floors with a footprint of a quarter of a square mile.



Inside the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni.

Accumulated layers of soil yielded pottery dating to 4000 BC and human remains to 2200 BC. But evidence suggests the Hypogeum is neither that young nor was it ever intended as a burial site, at least not deliberately, because over seven thousand human remains were found violently mixed with those of animals and sundry debris as though dumped into the caverns by a sudden, catastrophic event—such as the floods that overwhelmed the island around 2200 BC. Hundreds of skeletons had elongated skulls identical to those of Egyptian pharaohs, and of the giants buried in long barrows throughout the British Isles. Figurines of the Earth Mother, in a style contemporary with European art between 4000 and 7000 BC, were also exhumed, in addition to Paleolithic cave art consistent with the same

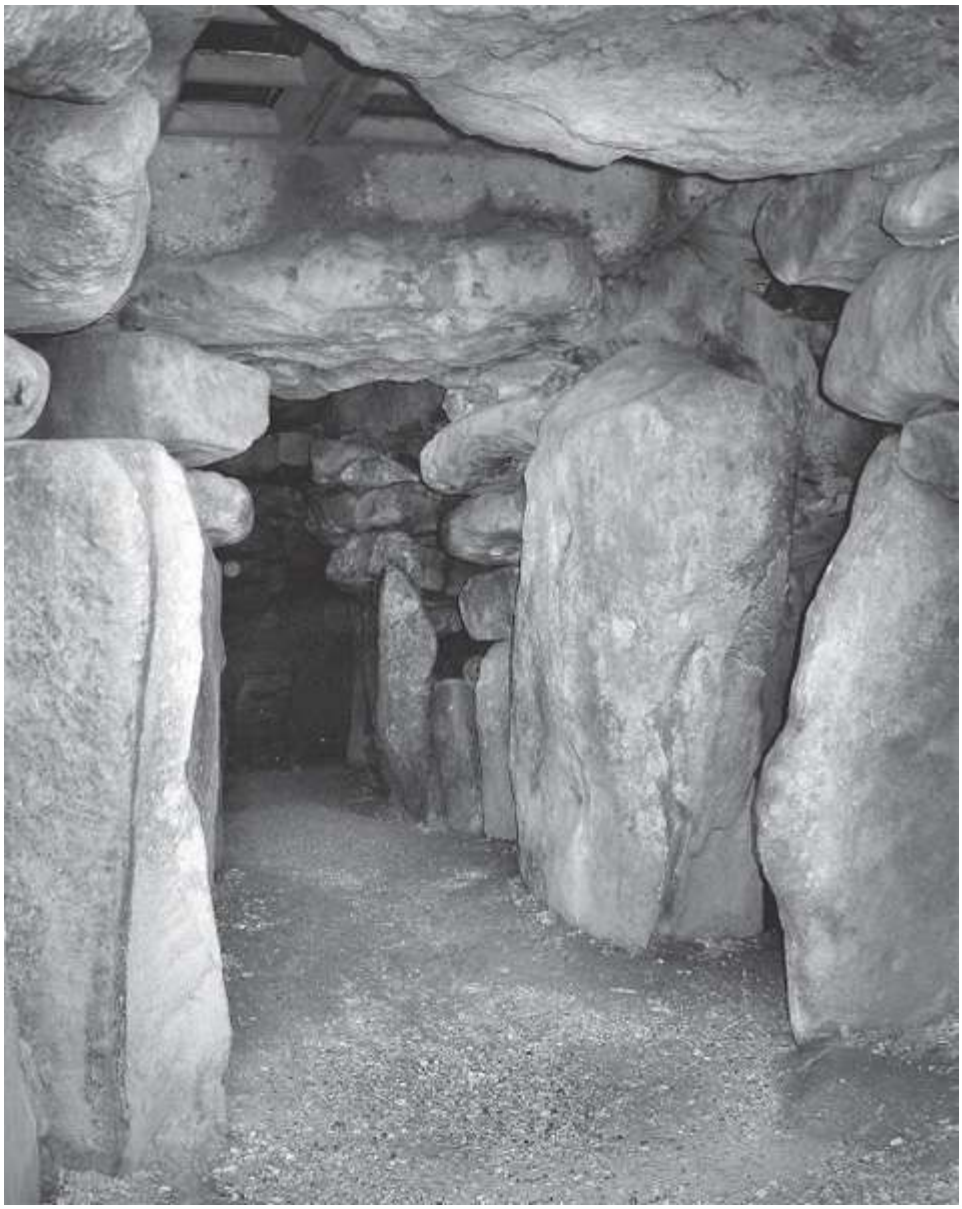
between 8000 and 30,000 BC; one image is an outline of a large human hand with six fingers.

Anyone who visits the Hypogeum cannot but be moved by the way the acoustical resonance lulls the senses into a receptive state. The hollowing of an estimated 2,000 tons of stone into carefully designed chambers allows low sounds made in certain places to be clearly audible throughout all three levels. It is a sensory environment perfectly designed for immersion into a subtler level of reality. The big clue appears in the red ochre and black manganese paint still daubed on the ceiling of its most resonant room, the Oracle Chamber, in the shape of interlocking hexagons, making one feel as though inside a honeycomb. And since the style is consistent with that of Paleolithic art, it places this environment in a time frame beyond 8000 BC.

During a quiet moment on one of my tours, the official guide took me aside in one of the chambers to tell me that working at the Hypogeum was for her the manifestation of a childhood dream. Without realizing the kind of research I do she proceeded to share with me how, of the myriad of hollows, she is magnetically drawn to sit in this very spot to pray or meditate when the Hypogeum is empty. She describes a sensation of leaving the body and feeling very protected as though in the company of benevolent spirits.

Quite a remarkable statement from an official guide.

She was also unaware of recent research proving how the chambers have been specially designed to conduct and manipulate sound to induce specific sensory effects, a feature common to monumental structures from Turkey to Peru. The resonant frequency of the Hypogeum is 112 Hz, and the designers wanted it just so. At this frequency the pattern of activity over the prefrontal cortex of the brain abruptly shifts, resulting in a relative deactivation of the language center and a temporary shift from left- to right-sided dominance related to emotional processing and creativity. This shift does not occur with adjacent frequencies of 90 or 130 Hz, so by design, these chambers are deliberately switching on an area of the brain that biobehavioral scientists believe relates to altered states of consciousness.[3]



Giant's passage grave with beehive chamber. West Kennett, England.

Malta's Hypogeum is not alone in this respect. Experiments into the acoustic behavior inside very ancient sites, such as Ireland's Newgrange and England's Chun Quoit, Cairn Euny, and Wayland's Smithy, found that the chambers, although designed to different configurations—oval, petal, cruciform, and beehive—all sustain a strong resonance at a frequency between 95 and 120 Hz. Internal and external petroglyphs even resemble the acoustical patterns generated by modern sound equipment.[4]

On the southwest cliffs of Malta, the surface temples of Mnajdra and Hagiar Qim may have played similar parts in the Mysteries play of living resurrection. The architects left no written record of what took place here—not uncommon given the secrecy with which they protected valuable information—but a glance at the unique way the stones' faces have been deliberately carved gives the game away: they are covered in small holes that from a short distance make the temples resemble massive honeycombs.

There exists a linguistic piece of evidence that further links ancient Melita to the initiation practices of the Mediterranean, and it is found in a nymph called Melissa.

Honeycomb pattern. Temple of Mnajdra, Malta.

A nymph is the personification of the female creative force of nature. Its Greek root *nymphe* also means 'bride' and 'veiled.' She's the kind of young maiden one marries, even though she is reachable only in places far

from human habitation and often by a person traveling alone—not unlike the description of the initiate undertaking a journey to a distant realm.

The Greek historian Porphyry describes how in the temples presided by Artemis, Demeter, or Cybele, the priestesses-in-attendance were called Melissae—the bees—and that this insect came to be associated with the concept of periodic regeneration by the manner in which the Melissae inherited their title from Greek mythology.

Melissa was one of a group of bee nymphs whose duty was to teach civilizing behaviors and bring men out of their state of ignorance. The antiquarian Mnaseas's account of Melissa gives a good picture of her function in this respect. According to folklore, Melissa was the first to find the honeycomb, taste it, and then mix it with water for a beverage. She taught others to do this, and thus the bee was named for her. Upon discovering the virtuous quality of this beverage, when she became attendant to the infant Zeus, she fed the god honey instead of milk so that his eyes could be opened.[5]

Porphyry wrote extensively of the priestesses of Demeter. When Melissa's neighbors tried to make her reveal the secrets of her initiation she remained silent, never letting a word pass from her lips. In anger, the women tore Melissa to pieces, causing bees to be born from her dead body.

In the sixth century BC the Orphic Mysteries pervaded Greece and the islands of the Mediterranean. The Orphics affirmed the divine origin of the soul, knowledge of which was achieved through initiation into the Mysteries and its process of transmigration. Initiates purified themselves and adopted ascetic practices for the purpose of cultivating the perfected human within. In one segment of Orphic poetry, Melitta is spoken of as a hive named Seira, the hive of Venus. "Let us celebrate the hive of Venus, who rose from the sea: that hive of many names: the mighty fountain from whence all kings are descended; from whence all the winged and immortal Loves were again produced."[6]

Seira was synonymous with the goddess Demeter, whose temples were referred to as "houses of Melitta"—just as in earlier times Mylitta was the Venus of the Babylonians.

Interestingly, in Gaelic Ireland, Melissa appears as Maoilíosa, and means 'servant of Jesus.'

That Malta once served as a place of pilgrimage for seekers of the Mysteries preparing for the ultimate ride of their lives in the Otherworld is hidden in plain view in a classic of Greek literature, *The Odyssey.*

In Homer's time poets were called Divines, and poetry, the language of the gods. Although his epic is set in the mythical island of Ogygia, Malta may have served as his inspiration. The island is the residence of the nymph Calypso, whose siren call lures Odysseus to be shipwrecked, whereupon she keeps him for seven years, hoping to make him her immortal husband. But Odysseus has other plans. He cannot bear to be parted from his wife, Penelope, so it falls upon Hermes, the god of wisdom, to tell Calypso to set him free, for it was not Odysseus's destiny to live with her forever in an altered reality, but as a mortal in an earthly environment. So Calypso sends him on his way in a boat, with bread and wine.

Like most myths the story is an allegory, a container for a spiritual truth. For starters, the name of the island is deliberate. The Greek adjective *ogugios* means 'primeval,' so the land to where the hero is lured is a place apart from his own time and space—much like the location one travels to in an altered state.

Then there's the nymph Calypso—also a purposely invented name meaning 'concealment of subtle knowledge'—who possesses supernatural powers and lives in a cave surrounded by cypresses and black poplars, all classic symbols of the Otherworld. Like the Celtic Brigit, Calypso is the bride who calls to Odysseus and steers him with her voice through the nightscape of the Otherworld so that the hero can immerse himself in the knowledge of the gods, and for which he is rightly offered eternal life. Odysseus is content enough at first but eventually realizes he has to apply what he has learned in this parallel universe for the knowledge to be of use in his mortal life, and thus he returns to the waking world.

Trident, symbol of transformation. Navajo sacred site, Monument Valley.

Like the classic journey of the initiate pursuing the Mysteries, all that is tangible in Odysseus's life is challenged—his absence from home, his ego, his desire—because in order to become an improved man he needs to follow the call of sacred knowledge to a place separate from the rest of the world, an island apart in the west. Homer's point is that to become more aware of life, one must take a break from routine and connect with the laws of the universe, via initiation if necessary. The story even opens with Poseidon, husband of Demeter, whose trident is the very symbol of transformation, just like Siva's—just as the symbol of the trident carved on the stones of sacred places announces them as locations set aside for shamanic migration and spiritual transformation.

Calypso mourning Odysseus's departure from Ogygia.

It seems then that Homer's epic is describing the initiate's immersion into the Mysteries, whereby he undertakes a journey into the Otherworld and returns resurrected. Given how Homer the Ionian was himself initiated in the sanctuary of Tyre, he was merely retelling his own experience in a manner that did not betray the secrets of the Mysteries, precisely as Plato remarked, "Homer's Hymn to Demeter, Pindar, and Sophocles already praise the bliss of initiates in the Otherworld, and pity those who die without having ever been initiated."[7]

7

Fifty Shades of Gnosticism

Around the period when early Christianity was defining itself, there existed a number of Gnostic traditions sharing similar if not identical views on living resurrection, the teaching of the Mysteries, and initiatory practices for accessing the Otherworld. But all of a sudden the introduction of a literal interpretation of Jesus's experience brought about an atmosphere of polarization, and as orthodox Christianity began to gain the upper hand, its centralized power suffocated Gnostic traditions one by one. Still, thanks to Greek scholars who gleaned much esoterica from their exposure to the great libraries in Alexandria, we are able to get an idea of how the original concept of living resurrection was widely practiced and accepted throughout the early classical world.

The term *gnosis* means 'direct knowledge of sacred things.' Unlike orthodox religions, the Gnostics concerned themselves with the practice of self-knowledge, of insights gained from inner experience rather than by objective reasoning. Theirs was a path for attaining divine wisdom through *religio,* literally 'reconnection with the source.' (That *religio* should be the root of *religion,* the very mechanism that nowadays limits billions of people from doing so, is beyond ironic.)

These goals were pursued and attained in the inner temples through psychospiritual methods beyond prayer, ritual, or toning, and by meditative disciplines involving trance, the application of subtle energies, and as the Egyptians already knew too well, the use of a symbolic science and language that provided a level of control throughout the entire process.

One of the most fascinating Gnostic gospels is the Treatise on Resurrection. In this work the ordinary human existence is referred to as a spiritual death, whereas living resurrection is the moment of personal enlightenment. The ritual experience reveals what truly exists, and whoever grasps this idea becomes spiritually alive. They can be rescued from the dead immediately. It's an idea that reverberates throughout the Gospel of Philip, which actually chastises ignorant Christians who take the resurrection literally: "Anyone who believes in resurrection as a literal truth is a fool." And further along, "Those who say they will die first and then rise are in error, they must receive the resurrection while they live."

One of the last places where these Mysteries were openly discussed was in the city of Alexandria. Clement, a Gnostic scholar and bishop of the period, describes in his treatise *Mysteries of the Faith Not To Be Divulged to All* how the secret Mysteries were concealed within the framework of each teaching so that to the uninformed—the 'dead'—they were perceived as literal stories, whereas the informed discerned subtler, more meaningful information: "The wise do not utter with their mouth what they receive in council. 'But what you hear in the ear,' says the Lord, 'proclaim upon the houses.' Allow them to receive the secret traditions of the true knowledge, and expound them aloft and conspicuously, and as we have heard in the ear, so to deliver them to whom it is requisite; but to all without distinction [the uninitiated] what is said to them is parables."[1]

Clement of Alexandria.

Clement further elucidates on the importance of maintaining Gnostic teachings away from the reckless; its practices being of such profound nature that they required of neophytes a high degree of personal and moral responsibility: “It is not wished that all things should be exposed indiscriminately to all on Sunday, or the benefit of the wisdom communicated to those who have not even in a dream been purified in soul. Nor are the Mysteries of the *Logos* to be expounded to the Profane.” He also makes it clear how the Gnostics as well as early Christian sects practiced two forms of the Mysteries: the lesser Mysteries for beginners and the Greater Mysteries, which lead to full gnosis and initiation. “The secret tradition of true gnosis was transmitted to a small number, by a succession of masters, and not in writing.”[2]

The final stages of initiation were heavily concealed, with ritual purifications and special instructions given prior to the mystical reveal. The secrecy came in particularly useful during Catholicism’s formative period, when anyone indoctrinated outside the church’s dogma was likely to be murdered, Gnostic Christians included.

The stated aim of the teachings was nothing less than a sacred marriage of the soul with the divine mind so as to elicit a personal transformation. As to the insights gained, those were never discussed with the uninitiated. Ptah-Mer, a high priest of the Egyptian city of Menfer, even took his experience to the grave, judging by the inscription on his sarcophagus: “He penetrated the Mysteries of every sanctuary. Nothing was hidden from him. He covered with a veil everything which he had seen.”

Later Greek informers only hint that the experience invigorated the felicity of the soul, now and hereafter, from the defilements of the material world while the soul itself is elevated to the reality of a grand inner revelation. Philosophers right up to Victorian times, many of them initiates themselves, describe it as the most sublime experience of their lives, one that offered both mystical visions as well as ecstatic hope of conditions in the afterlife.

One person who did attempt to explain it was the sixth-century bishop Salvius of Albi, and then only after persistent prodding from his brother, for which the entities in the Otherworld appear to have had their way with Salvius, much to his consternation: “Woe is me, that I have dared to reveal such a mystery. For behold, the sweet fragrance which I was drinking from the holy place, and by which I was sustained for these three days without food or drink, has receded from me. And my tongue is covered with horrible sores, and is so swollen that it seems to fill my whole mouth. Now I know that it was not well pleasing to the Lord my God that these secrets should be publicized.”[3]

Although Gnostic philosophy was practiced around the Mediterranean by different sects, each one adhered to a near-identical recipe.

SETHIAN GNOSTICISM

The Sethian treatises form the bulk of the earliest Gnostic gospels found in Nag Hammadi and appear to predate Christianity and possibly Judaism. The Sethian ritual was based on a five-step initiation called the Five Seals, which included washing, baptism, and anointing as part of the purification and preparation of the individual on the path to spiritual rebirth. There are

numerous accounts of visions of the transcendental world and its contents, not to mention hymns and prayers directed specifically at the various supernatural beings encountered within the visionary experience.[4] The process, outlined in the Gospel of the Egyptians, stops short of revealing the most important steps of the initiation other than describing the ritual experience as a prelude to gaining secret knowledge, yet promising that the incorruptible mind both received and experienced illumination.

Sethian initiates understood that God is an internal rather than external force, and upon being raised from the dead they proclaimed, "O self-begotten perfect one, who is not outside me . . . I declare your glory truly, for I have comprehended you . . . O Aeon, O God of silence."[5] Allogenes—a Sethian Gnostic who lent his name to one text—was himself privy to resurrection and described his experience: "Man's soul shall become, when it leaves the body, a great flood of Light, so as to traverse all the regions until it comes into the Kingdom of Mystery."

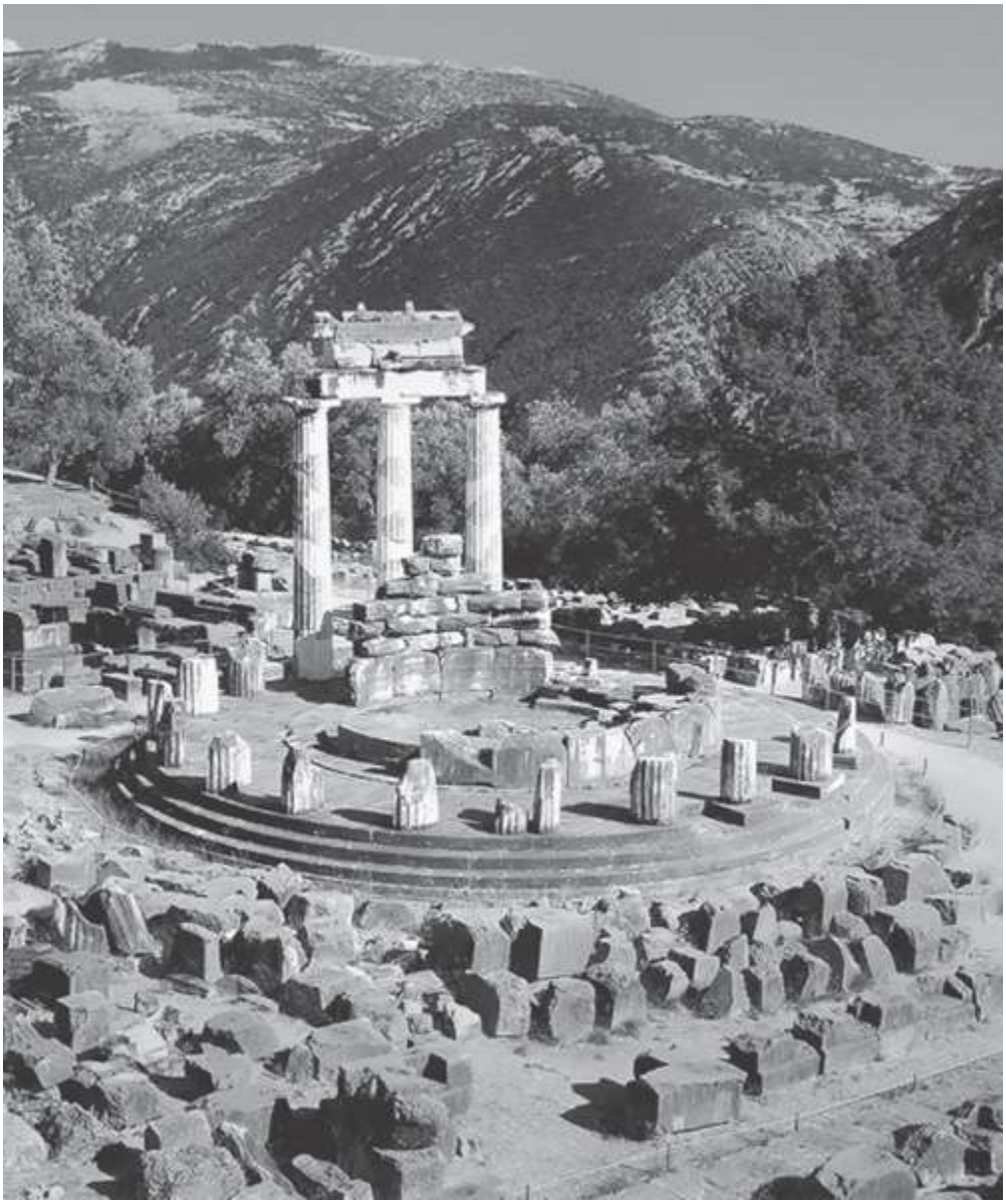
DELPHIC AND ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

Even as late as 1860, Greek villagers living around Mount Olympus venerated the forces of nature that were believed to emanate from this sacred domain of Zeus, the Greek rejuvenation of Osiris. The local people would even direct pilgrims to secret abodes on the mountain where rituals and ceremonies associated with the Otherworld had been continuously performed as an extension of the Mysteries of Delphi.

It is not known when the Delphic Mysteries came into being. The temple complex with which they are associated may have been used as an oracle and gateway to the Otherworld since prehistoric times. Regardless, the teachings became a great influence on the sixth-century BC philosopher Pythagoras, himself an initiate of Delphi, as well as a great proponent of reincarnation, having many times recounted his former lives in vivid detail, one of them as a beautiful courtesan.

The earliest known use of the caves at Delphi for the performance of the Mysteries and their resurrection ceremonies is 800 BC. Its oracle was called Pythia, after the serpent god of nature who was calmed by Zeus. Like all myths of a godlike being calming a writhing snake, it is a metaphor

describing the controlled manipulation of the Earth's electromagnetic energies.



Temple of Athena at Delphi.

In later epochs, when worship of the divine feminine was supplanted by the masculine, Delphi was rededicated to the solar god Apollo. The oracle was active between spring and autumn, after which it was said, "Apollo deserted the temple"—as the sun is seen to do in winter—whereupon it became the domain of the cult of Dyonisus, the god of

rejuvenation, yet another expression of Osiris. Vision quests as well as prophecy beyond the present into the past and future were experienced in the inner, subterranean chamber of the temple, assisted by a narcotic, in this case a naturally occurring gas called ethylene, which, if used in concentrations of less than 20 percent, induces a trancelike effect.[6]

Oracle of Delphi taking the vapors.

Surviving accounts from classical Greek philosophers provide the most lucid details of what took place in the Mysteries schools of old, proving that secrecy and a two-tier system was maintained for centuries. Writing in the third century, the scholar Heliodorus instructs us that the rites of passage into the Otherworld—specifically the true meaning behind the myth of Isis and Osiris—were not made clear to ordinary people, and

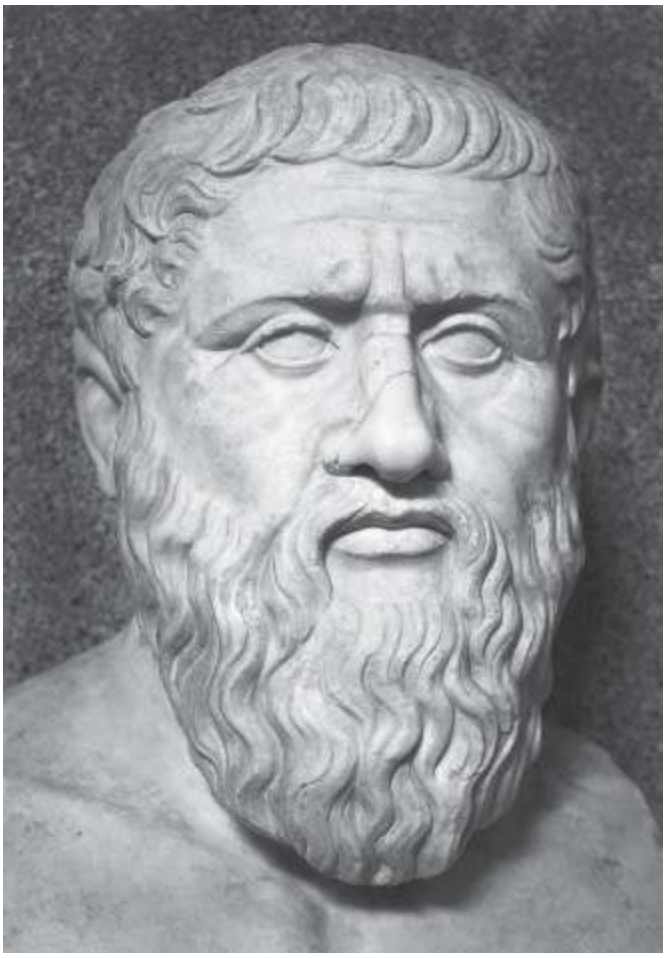
priests said to be skilled in the secrets of nature "instruct those who wish to know these private matters in their chapels by candlelight."[7]

Other writings pretty much reveal that all the authors were initiates themselves, a goodly number having experienced living resurrection. As Plato declared:

> Those who are initiated into the great mysteries perceive a wondrous light. Purer regions are reached, and fields where there is singing and dancing, sacred words and divine visions, inspire a holy awe. Then the man, perfected and initiated, free and able to move super-physically, without constraint, celebrates the mysterious with a crown on his head. He lives among pure men and saints. He sees on earth the many who have not been initiated and purified, buried in the darkness, and through fear of death, clinging to their ills for want of belief in the happiness of the beyond.[8]

Hardly a description by a man recounting a secondhand experience.

Plato spent some thirteen years in the libraries of Egypt, long enough to be acquainted with the mystical practices of its ancient writers. In works such as *Phaedrus* he reveals details of his own spiritual journey, in his case via the Eleusinian Mysteries: "We beheld the beautiful visions and were initiated into the mystery which may be truly called blessed."[9] Plato also offers profound knowledge of the rites, identifying the two levels of initiates by name—the *mystai* and *epotai*—even descriptions of visionary experiences that followed: how the soul is able to "grow wings" to ascend to the spiritual realms, how beyond the world of gods lies "a reality with which true knowledge is concerned, a reality without colour or shape, intangible but utterly real, apprehensible only by intellect which is the pilot of the soul."[10]



Plato.

In his *Dialogues,* Plato points out that the aim of the philosopher is to become conscious of the wisdom found only in the superphysical reality of the Otherworld while still living:

> True philosophers make dying their profession, and to them of all people death is least alarming . . . [for they are] glad to set out for the place where there is the prospect of attaining the object of their lifelong desire, which is Wisdom. . . . If one is a real philosopher, one will be of the firm belief that one will never find Wisdom in all its purity in any other place."[11]

Not surprising, then, that he regarded metaphysics as one of the highest stages of personal enlightenment. "The true occupation of the

philosopher is to allow the soul to be released from the body and run free," which he apparently did. Plato even admitted how his participation in living resurrection shaped his philosophical doctrine.

The philosopher Plotinus had an inherent distrust of the material world. For him it was a lesser image of something "higher and intelligible . . . the true part of genuine being." Like Plato, he too studied in Alexandria and comported himself in the highest moral and spiritual standards. Spending time immersed in the sophisticated climate of Alexandria may have developed these qualities in the man but what really opened his eyes was his experience of living resurrection, which he savored four times, returning ever more enlightened each time.

> In this ecstatic union, the soul retains her self-consciousness. But all the stages are but preparations for the final stage, that of mystical union with God the one, who transcends beauty, in an ecstasy characterized by the absence of all duality. . . . There shall a man see, as seeing may be in heaven, both God and Himself: himself made radiant, filled with intelligible light, or rather grown one with the light in its purity, without any burden, any heaviness. . . . This ecstatic union is however, of a brief duration so far as this life is concerned: we looked for its complete and permanent possession in the future state, when we are freed from the hindrances of the body. . . . God is not external to anyone, but is present in all things, though they are ignorant that he is so.[12]

Writing two centuries later, Themistius describes the experience in much the same terms. His testament is all the more poignant given how he was a non-Christian admitted to the senate of Constantinople under Theodosius I, the emperor who ordered the destruction of the temple of Delphi and the burning of the Serapeum in Alexandria:

Celebration of Poseidon, the god of transformation, at Eleusis.

> At the point of death, the soul has the same experience as those who are being initiated into the great mysteries. At first it wanders and wearily hurries to and fro, and journeys with suspicion through the dark like a person who is uninitiated; then come all the terrors before the final initiation, shuddering, trembling, sweating, amazement: then one is struck with a marvelous light, one is received into pure regions and meadows, with voices and dances and the majesty of holy sounds and shapes; among these, he who has fulfilled initiation wanders free, and released and bearing his crown joins in the divine communion, and consorts with pure and holy men.[13]

How Themistius got away with this no one knows. In his day the church enacted laws proclaiming such experiences as heretical, particularly with regard to the following extract:

> There are . . . initiatory rites, by means of which are revealed, not the mysteries of a municipal temple, but of the world itself, the vast temple of all the gods. . . . To be initiated is to experience the same knowledge as one obtains from death—though of

course, with initiation the seeker returns to this world and does not die.[14]

Philo of Alexandria was born some twenty years before Jesus and survived him by the same amount. He claimed to have been initiated into the Jewish Mysteries and later became an initiator himself after founding his own school, the Mysteries of Moses. Philo stated how Moses himself had been initiated into the ancient Mysteries of an even older tradition, handed down and perpetuated over time by a select few.

The early Greeks always credited the source of these secrets as belonging to earlier Egyptian practices, and they continued the resurrection mysteries of Isis and Osiris well into the second century, albeit Hellenizing the names of the gods so as to appeal to a Greek audience. The Syrian philosopher Iamblichus also declared the Egyptian Mysteries secrets as the main inspiration for later Gnostic traditions. He familiarized himself with Egyptian ritual tradition, especially its use of *heka* . . . 'practical magic' . . . which involved the bending of natural laws, giving students empirical experience of resurrection.

Iamblichus warned of the dangers inherent in initiation from lack of knowledge of the baser emotions, what he called "the lower material self." He acknowledged the positive and negative implications of this magic, referring to it when used correctly as *theurgia* (working with the gods), and *goetia* (dark magic) if used with selfish or evil intent. He describes the ability of initiates to allow the soul to leave the body and fly into the Amdwat, how the soul is drawn up by the gods, "acustimating them, while they are yet in the body, to be separated from the body and thus reach the source of eternity."[15] Through an undisclosed process the initiates were "able to ascend to more elevated and universal realities." His teachings mirror the instructions given in the Egyptian Pyramid Texts where the initiate was educated on the dangers of the night hours that the soul must conquer if it is to reach the Otherworld safely. Lack of thorough preparation of the lower self, particularly the loss of control over destructive emotions such as fear, could lead to all manner of ill effects from the dangers inherent in traveling through the nether regions of nature.

The precursor of the Delphic Mysteries was the ancient cult of the earth goddess Demeter circa 1600 BC. Its initiation rite fell under the title

Eleusinian Mysteries—named for the temple in which they were enacted—which gave initiates an intimate experience of the afterlife while still living. *Eleusis* means ‘arrival at mystery or secrecy,’ and the offer of membership was open to heroes such as Heracles, but equally to lay people who passed certain tests.[16] The initiation was performed in three stages: the lesser Mysteries in the spring began with *katharsis,* an instructional and purification rite, followed by *sustasis,* a preparatory rite that, according to Clement of Alexandria, was typically conducted by the seashore in salt water. The greater Mysteries followed the autumn equinox, lasted nine days, and were restricted to initiates who’d undergone a period of moral scrutiny and passed the test, as shown by the inscription above the doorway to the temple they were about to enter: “Those who are pure and healthy in hand and heart and who have no evil conscience in themselves can rightfully enter.”[17]

Initiation into the Mysteries of Eleusis, fifth century BC, Greece.

The final ceremony—in which the initiate was locked away inside the Chamber of Mysteries—commenced in the late hours and began with a reenactment of the myth of Persephone's descent into and return from the Otherworld, whereupon hierophants declared aloud the initiates' rebirth. This ritual was called *teleste,* when the candidates were brought almost to the point of death so they might stand on the threshold of another reality and see it with total clarity.

A year later came the final stage, the *epopteia* or vision. This was conducted in a dark, sacred chamber called the Telestron (place of completion, perfection), where the forces of nature were harnessed within a geometrically designed environment so as to facilitate the transformative experience. According to a description by the poet Pindar, during an altered state initiates discovered "the end of life and its God-given beginning." The revelations that transpired at these occasions were deemed a private matter and held in confidence; as one initiate declares, "I am therein initiated . . . but I do not tell it to anybody."[18] There was even a point where expressing a personal opinion on such matters in public was rigidly enforced by Greek law.[19]

To consciously undergo a near-death experience must surely be a harrowing endeavor, and yet the benefits of initiation clearly overweighed its detriments, as the philosopher Cicero Enthuses pointed out, "These mysteries have brought us from rustic savagery to a cultivated and refined civilization . . . we have learned from them the first principles of life. We have gained the understanding not only to live happily but also to die with better hope."[20]

HERMETICISM

A blend of religion and philosophy, Hermeticism runs parallel to Gnosticism and the oracles of the Chaldeans, and its aim was nothing less than the experience of ultimate reality. The name derives from Hermes, a Greek reincarnation of the Egyptian ibis-headed god Djehuti, thereby revealing the timeless origin of its teachings.

Djehuti, god of wisdom, known later as Thoth and Hermes.

In the Hermetic text Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth, a voluntary out-of-body experience is described in which the candidate, while in the Otherworld, ascends through a series of levels and experiences a mystical revelation. The seeker, speaking to Hermes Trismegistus, says, "What shall I say? We have received this light. And I myself see this same vision in you. And I see the eighth, and the souls that are in it, and the angels singing a hymn to the ninth and its powers. And I see him who has the power of them all, creating those [that are] in the spirit." To which

Hermes advises, “It is advantageous from now on, that we keep silence in a reverent posture. Do not speak about the vision from now on.”

Further along, the dialogue provides a description of how a candidate was carefully prepared to undergo the ritual of living resurrection. “By stages he advances and enters into the way of immortality. And thus he enters into the understanding of the eighth that reveals the ninth.” At one point the seeker appears to have reached an ecstatic stage in another dimension:

> I pray to the end of the universe and the beginning of the beginning, to the object of man’s quest, the immortal discovery, the begetter of light and truth, the sower of reason, the love of immortal life. . . . I am the instrument of your spirit; Mind is your plectrum. And your counsel plucks me. I see myself! I have received power from you. For your love has reached us.

Hermeticism (The Way of Hermes) is found in Taoism (The Way), and its influence is similarly felt in Buddhism, Hinduism, the purest forms of Christianity, and Sufism, the esoteric branch of Islam. Hermes also referred to the path of initiation as *The Ancient Road,* whose teachings on spiritual transfiguration would mutate into the art of alchemy during the medieval era; in the eighteenth century Hermeticism was even practiced by Isaac Newton, while its concepts appear throughout the philosophy of Scottish Rite Freemasonry.

THE INCUBATORS

With the supremacy of the Catholic Church in Europe came the complete outlawing of all rituals associated with personal, living resurrection, for the obvious reason that if anyone besides Jesus could do it, the pope and his bishops would be unemployed. Still, pockets of dissent persisted well into the fifth century in southern Italy.

Before Velia became a Roman city it was the Greek colony of Hyele. Its fifth-century BC temple-school of Eleatics, founded by the philosophers Zeno and Parmenides, is situated on a promontory overlooking the

Tyrrhenian Sea, and from the air bears an uncanny resemblance to the head and neck of a massive python. Among the ruins of the temple there are bases of statues attesting to the works of healer-priests who went by telling titles such as Lord of the Lair, whose specialty was to preside over an initiatory technique known as *incubation*.

Incubation involved lying down in stillness and silence in the darkness of a subterranean chamber and, through the use of incantations, falling into a state of consciousness carefully balanced between waking and sleeping, before entering the Otherworld to experience a prophetic vision. The tutelary god presiding over such secret ceremonies was Apollo, another interpretation of Osiris.

Not far from Hyele, in the northwestern corner of the Bay of Naples, there existed a complementary, if not altogether more astonishing place at Baia, where over one hundred tunnels lead to a fifth-century BC Greek temple like arteries to a navel. Classical sources describe the priests-in-residence as hermits or protectors of an oracle, living underground and communicating with the exterior world via tunnels.[21] It was originally dedicated to the goddess Artemis, although it is more likely to have been her mother, Demeter, given how the entrance to the main tunnel is aligned with the sunrise on the summer solstice.

Zeno of Elea shows youths the left and right doors of Truth and Falsehood.

Beehive dome of the temple complex at Baia dedicated to the Divine Virgin, still an impressive ruin in the fifteenth century.

Around the time of the Roman general Agrippa a major effort was made to deliberately seal up this man-made underground world with bricks and mortar, and in-fill the tunnels with rubble. The site remained undiscovered until 1962, was briefly investigated, then sealed up again by the Italian government, and its very existence made secret.[22] The only residue of sacredness on this volcanic peninsula of Baia was the temple and its crumbling beehive-shaped dome.

When latter-day efforts were resumed to uncover this initiatory complex, a doorway six feet tall yet barely twenty-one inches wide was discovered. Once inside, a passage several hundred feet in length descends westward, in the symbolic direction of the Otherworld, accompanied by a fetid and humid chemical breeze emanating from its depths. A myriad of tunnels then emerge like an octopus, some deliberately leading nowhere, some to a maze of rooms, but only one descends claustrophobically toward an artificially constructed waterway, about eighty feet wide, on the other

side of which lies a pier with steps carved out of the volcanic tuft,[23] as though the traveler expected to be ferried across the mythical River Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the Greek underworld.

Which of course was precisely the point. The entire underground maze was designed to resemble the passage into the Otherworld. According to the poet Vergil, entry was only possible upon navigating the cave of Hypnos, god of sleep, whereupon 'the dead' have their memories of mortal life erased by drinking the waters of the Lethe so they may be incarnated. If the candidates chose poorly, forward progress along the tunnels was impeded by dead ends. If on the other hand they chose wisely, the path would lead to the river where they'd be ferried to the other side, continuing along the path and into the underground ritual chamber (now bricked up) to discover themselves in "places of delight . . . where souls take ease amid the Blessed Groves," as Vergil wrote in *The Aeneid.*

It is interesting to note that the blocked paths always veer to the left—symbolizing the limitation of the left brain of rationality on this journey of spiritual self-discovery—whereas the correct paths veer right, the intuitive hemisphere of the brain. Even the name Hyele was a deliberate transliteration of *hyle,* Aristotle's concept of matter. Thus an initiate descending the tunnels of the academy was figuratively experiencing the notion of matter and its dissolution.

Ironically, Vergil's famous story of Aeneas visiting the Otherworld seems to have taken place at this very initiation complex in Baia, as though the writer, through his hero, was conveying his own experience. For one thing, in *The Aeneid* the hero makes an offering of mistletoe at the entrance to the Otherworld. At the bricked-up entrance to the real-life ritual chamber there is indeed a purposefully placed niche for such an offering.

Sarcophagus carved with Dyonisian scene, suggesting it was used for initiation.

8

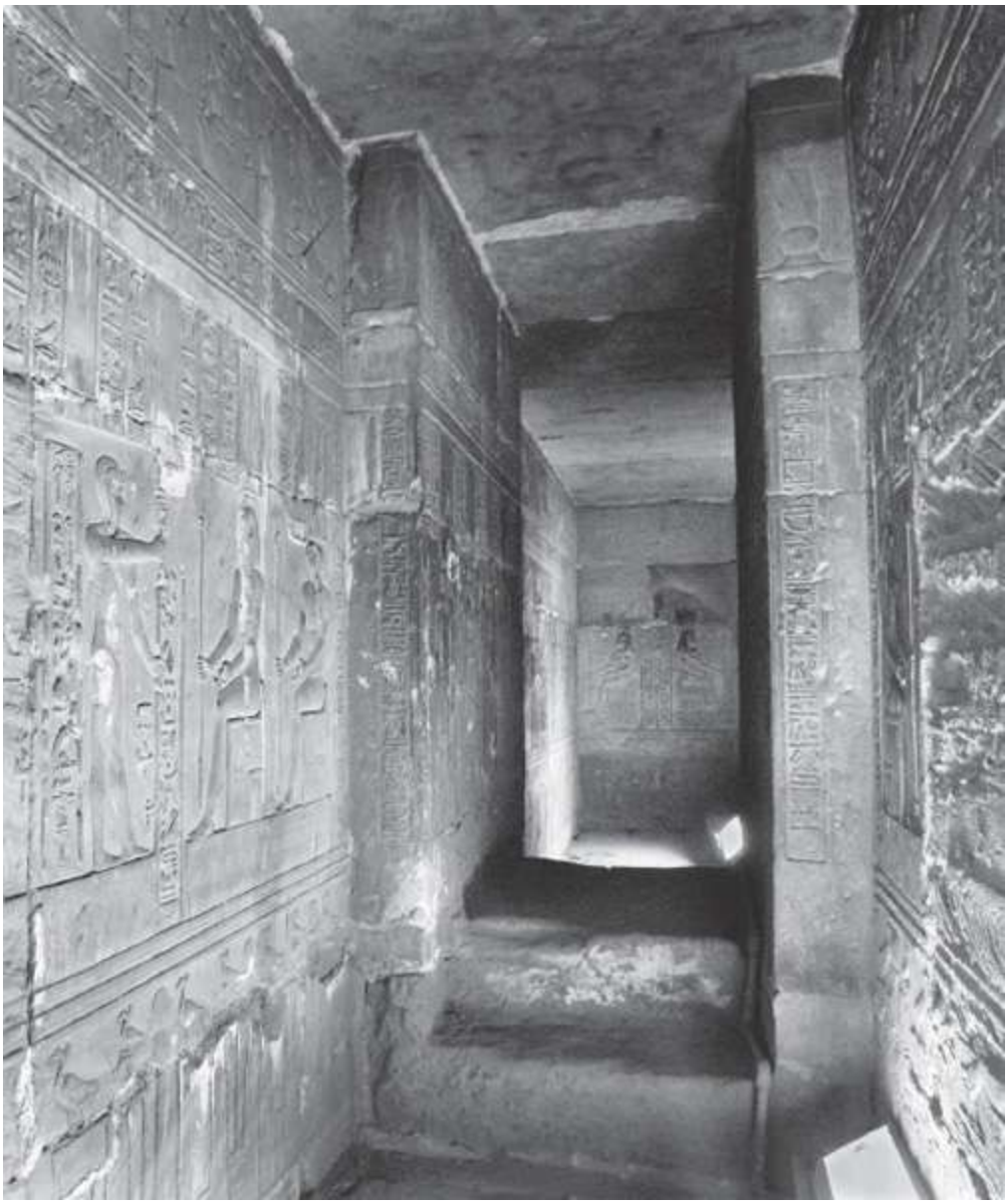
The Secret Bridal Chamber

If you recall, Cyrus the Great's ziggurat, located in a region Persians denominated as Paradise, featured a rectangular building on the summit, with a chamber accessed by an awkwardly narrow passageway—a feature not unlike that of the Incubators' temple at Baia, the mound of Knowth, or any Egyptian pyramid. Inside said chamber lay a golden bed, a table with cups, a golden trough or sarcophagus, and an abundance of garments, but no dead Cyrus.[1] Alexander the Great's eyewitness account offers a unique insight into the purpose behind such temples as places of ritual resurrection rather than burial, for in a region where Mithraism was practiced, its adherents were known to use a bed chamber during a bridal ceremony called *nymphus,* which marked the final phase of initiation, the notable difference being that no flesh-and-bone bride was involved.

The veil over this mystery is lifted further in the city dedicated to wisdom and founded, ironically, by Alexander himself: Alexandria. There, a piece of valuable information was conveyed to Clement of Alexandria by someone who underwent initiation, a specific phrase uttered during the final stages of the ceremony, "I have descended into the bed chamber." One of Clement's contemporaries, the Algerian writer Apuleius, adds a candid description of his own initiation experience and, more importantly, takes us right up to the moment he reaches this restricted chamber:

> The High Priest ordered all uninitiated persons to depart, invested in me a new linen garment and led me by the hand into the inner recesses of the sanctuary itself. . . . I approached the

very gates of death and set one foot on Persephone's threshold, I journeyed through all the elements and yet was permitted to return. At midnight I saw the sun shining as if it were noon; I entered the presence of the gods of the Underworld and of the Upperworld, stood near and worshipped them.[2]



Subterranean bridal chamber, Dendera, Egypt.

Such affirmations suggest that the initiates' engagement in the Otherworld took on the form of a sacred marriage, the result of which was

the regeneration of the soul back into the world of the living, followed by a resurrection from either a bed, a boat, a trough, or a sarcophagus.

The environment used exclusively for the final coupling of the initiate with his bride—Isis or her regional *doppelgänger*—is described in the Eleusinian Mysteries as *pastos* (bridal chamber). As it is in Valentinian Gnosticism, where the final act in the five steps of initiation culminated inside a bridal chamber, a secret room in a temple or sacred place where the candidate fulfilled the union of masculine and feminine in what was essentially a reenactment of the mystery play of Isis and Osiris.[3] The term was still in use in the second century, as proved by the Valentinians' archnemesis, Bishop Iranaeus, who wrote, "Some of them prepare a 'bridal chamber' and perform a mystagogy [a sacred rite relating to the Mysteries], with certain invocations, for those who are being perfected, and they claim that what they are effecting is a 'spiritual marriage.'"[4]

The Valentinian mythos was centered around the sacred marriage of the masculine Yesus (I Am) with the feminine Sophia (knowledge, gnosis), and that view helps clarify a curious statement made by Jesus himself, "Many are standing at the door, but it is the single ones who will enter the bridal chamber."[5] These singles are initiates who learned to harmonize their complementary opposites, made the outside like the inside, the above as below, and were subsequently deemed fit to proceed with the final shamanic union.

The Gospel of Philip refers to a restricted room used by Jesus by the same name: "The lord did everything in a mystery, a baptism, a chrism, a Eucharist, a redemption, and a bridal chamber."[6] Philip points out that only a son of the bridal chamber could be in a position to receive spiritual resurrection, and was adamant it ought to be attained while the candidate was living. He describes that in the consummation of this final act the soul is restored to its primal state, its polar opposites unified, the outcome being inner peace. And yet, true to tradition, no specific details are revealed aside from the following mouthwatering tidbit: "In the world of truth, if you see anything of that place you become one with what is there. You saw the spirit and you became the spirit."[7] Philip infers that the union is not sexual, in a physical sense, but ecstatic in the celestial sense. "Everyone who enters the bridal chamber will kindle the light. . . . If anyone becomes a son of the bridal chamber, he will receive the light."[8]

The sacred union between soul and Source brings with it enormous spiritual benefits because the experience of this highest of realities bestows on the initiated the very characteristics of the world of the gods. “If you become one of those from above, it is those from above who will rest on you.”[9] This aphorism is echoed on walls of ancient temples throughout the world, where it is stated that the person who enters the innermost chamber is “transformed into a god, into a bright star.”

One of the earliest surviving accounts of the marriage of the earthly initiate to a divine bride is found in the Sumerian Song of Inanna, quite possibly the original inspiration for the Song of Solomon, which later found its way into in the Old Testament. Inanna is a lunar goddess who takes on a bridegroom in the form of the shepherd Dumuzi/Tammuz, who becomes a resurrected god-man on the winter solstice. Inanna is depicted bearing the Gra-al, a cup filled with the nectar of supreme excellence.

Innana was also a hierodule, a ‘sacred woman,’ a term awarded to Sumerian high priestesses who presided over the most sacred aspect of the bridal chamber ceremony. Their scarlet robes of office represented *ritu* (truth), from which emerged the word *ritual*. As the epitome of the bridal ceremony, the hierodule explains another mystery of the sacred marriage, the *hieros gamos,* replayed over two thousand years later in the scenes between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Shortly before the Bible was translated into English, the title *hierodulai* was mistranslated into *harlot,* serving the church well in its role of minimizing the importance of the matriarchal in sacred ritual, and ever since conveniently identifying the woman in red, be it the “whore of Babylon,” Inanna/Ishtar, or Mary Magdalene, with prostitution.

An early tradition of the bridal chamber ceremony can be traced to the Temple of Solomon. The Book of Ezekiel, for example, literally describes how the elders of Jerusalem “engaged in secret mysteries . . . of Egyptian provenance” in darkness under the temple, and the secret chamber used for the occasion was referred to as “the bridal chamber.” According to the Zohar—the foundation text of the Kabbalah—the marriage of the heavenly king and queen could only be consummated if Solomon built a temple in Jerusalem in which a special room was allocated for this specific wedding ceremony.

The Mandeans, who upheld John the Baptist as their preeminent spiritual teacher (and still do), continued this tradition. They were strictly organized into brotherhoods, the innermost being initiates, prophets, or magi called *nasoraiyi,* whose duty it was to preserve gnosis—not surprising given how their name derives from the earlier Babylonian *nasiru,* meaning 'preserver of divine secrets.' Later they became popularly known as Nazorites.[10]

John, and later Jesus, belonged to the sacerdotal class qualified to practice at the Mandeans' most secret rite, that of the bridal chamber.[11] This most secret of ceremonies featured a baptism in flowing water, anointment with oil, a meal, a redemption, and finally—for the candidate expected to return alive from the Otherworld—a spiritual marriage inside the bridal chamber, culminating in the regeneration of the individual: a living resurrection. The ritual was deemed so important that should the presiding official of the bridal chamber, be it priest or priestess, slip up on any part or phrase, they would be required to atone through baptism, and in more serious cases, they were disqualified for life.

Ezekiel points to a closed gate that is only "accessed through Mary," a reference to a restricted bridal chamber.

Ezekiel describes reaching the Otherworld by virtue of a chariot.

How this special chamber should have come to be associated with a bride may stem from the ancient societies' belief that wisdom emanated from an Otherworld presided predominantly by a female deity, a Mother-Goddess or Divine Virgin who provided hot spots across the Earth where one is perfectly capable of accessing her directly. This exalted maiden represents the creative source; she is the personification of the primeval force. In the Celtic world such qualities are bestowed upon the goddess Brìghde/Brigit, the presiding deity of countless rock chambers and caves used by the Celts for reaching the Otherworld. Being that her name is the root of *bride,* an interaction with her oracles becomes an act of marriage in itself, particularly when one enters such environments with the intent of uniting with the celestial bride.

The experience of the bridal chamber rite offered the possibility for conflicting polarities of the soul to be transcended, for the imaginative feminine and logical masculine hemispheres of personality to find reconciliation. According to the Gospel of Philip, "It is truly necessary to be born again through the image. Which image? Resurrection . . . the bridal

chamber and the image must enter into the truth: this is the regeneration."[12] Immersed in the solitary darkness of a bridal chamber, the sensory deprivation elicits a light of a higher consciousness within the initiate, and as the soul at last "enters into her rest," a divine revelation dawns on the individual, a point made very clear in the Gospel of Philip: "Every person who [enters] the bedroom will kindle the light and it will be manifest to him or her alone, hidden not in the darkness and the night, but hidden in a perfect day and holy light."[13]

Seekers of a personal marriage with the Divine were referred to as "children of the bridal chamber." They believed that love and wisdom are interdependent, and true enlightenment brings intellectual as well as spiritual self-transformation. Not surprising, then, that so many came from a well-educated, intellectual elite, and many became the architects of model, enlightened societies: leaders, healers, and prophets, some possessing gifts of telepathy and clairvoyance.[14]

In 60 BC historians such as Diodorus were still commenting on the ancient practice of the secret bridal chamber, which by his time had developed over four thousand years and outlasted the age of megaliths. The ritual was known to offer a potential of enormous personal development for ordinary people accustomed to scratching an existence from the land and looking at the world no further than its observable boundaries: a definitive mortal life bookended by birth and physical death. Needless to say, such a transformation would have gone hand in hand with a rise in civic qualities, thereby augmenting the level of society, if not for all at least for those who'd experienced the journey to the Otherworld. Not to paint too inflated a picture, mind you, because human failings inevitably allowed this spiritual technology to corrupt, as history shows, deteriorating as it has over the past thirty centuries into a control mechanism usurped by priests and kings and organized religion alike.

The association between the bridal chamber and the resurrection ritual is described in allegorical terms in the Book of Enoch, a work with an origin as mysterious as the mysteries of ascension it portrays. Enoch's description of a journey to the stars is, to all intents and purposes, an instruction manual for initiates by an adept because the lucid details in Enoch's work could only have come from someone who has himself experienced the Otherworld.

Enoch's heavenly ascents prepare the candidates stage by stage for the psychological transformation that takes place on a consciousness-shifting cruise. This initiatory rite was known to practitioners of the magical arts of the period as Maasah Merkavah (the Work of the Chariot), later to become the science of self-transformation, Merkaba, which translates as 'vehicle of the spirit-body.' Etymologically its roots are Egyptian: *mr* (love), *ka* (spirit), *ba* (body); *mr* is also the root of *mry,* otherwise known today as Mary, the Divine Virgin.

The counterpart to Merkaba is the esoteric tradition originally known as *qbl* (to reveal), commonly known today as *ka-ba-allah,* and first-century residents of Jerusalem could find its teachings in a restricted book called *Bahir* (Illumination), also known as *The Way of the Great Return*.[15]

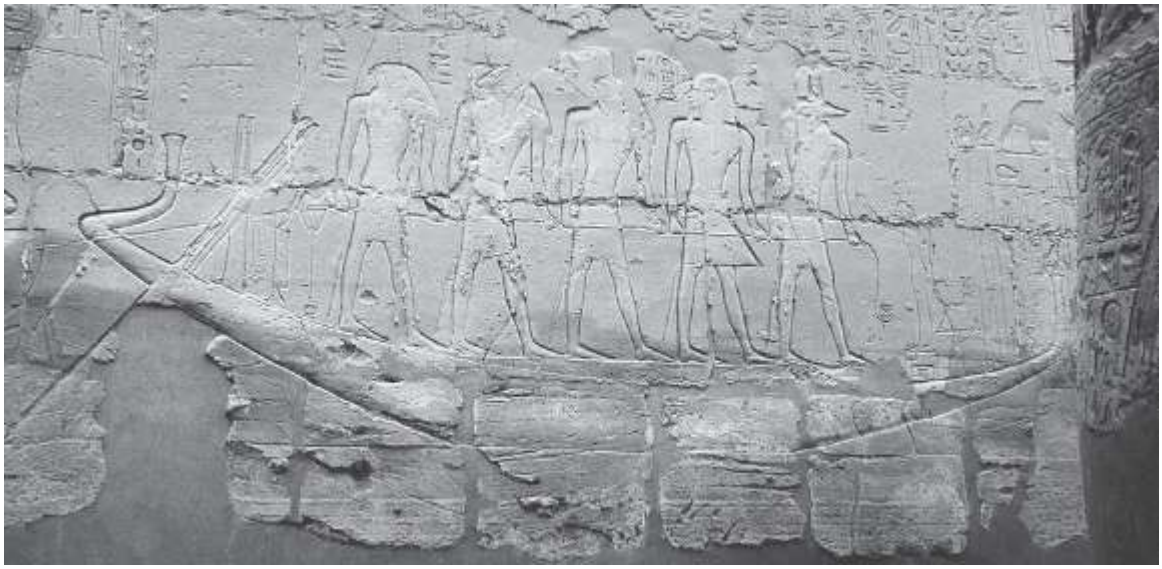
The Work of the Chariot, or Chariot of the Gods, is an ancient tradition stretching from central Asia to Egypt that connected kings and prophets with the realm of gods. Such people were said to mingle with deities in the Otherworld only to return radically altered, and the vessel by which their body and soul were conveyed across the threshold was referred to as a bridal chamber. And it wasn't just any old room—its dimensions were made to conform to universal laws of rhythm and proportion, its location chosen to coincide with the Earth's naturally occurring rivers of geomagnetism. Even the energetic property of the stone used for its construction was carefully considered by masons, most of whom had already experienced the process. It was alchemy in the pure sense of the word.

For Osiris, his chariot of choice was the boat, the one depicted so profusely upon the walls of temples up and down the Nile, such as Luxor and Karnak, where the chariot tradition of ascension is linked with the four stars forming the oblong in Ursa Major, the Great Bear, the constellation Egyptians understood to act as the guardian of initiation secrets pertaining to the Otherworld. The same concept reappears later in the legend of Arth Fawr—the Arthurian story of a bear-man who undertakes a life-changing journey, defies death, becomes spiritually resurrected, and returns to resuscitate a dying kingdom.

Clearly for the ritual of the bridal chamber to have survived this long is reliable evidence that it worked. For one thing, its benefits were trumpeted in the subterranean chamber beneath the pyramid of Unas, where

an inscription categorically asserts the results are “proven to be true a million times.” That was in 2350 BC. No wonder living resurrection was taken up by so many mystical sects; even as late as the twelfth century the Cathars performed a version of it in the Languedoc.

And its practitioners shared something else in common: they were all either banned or burned alive by the Catholic Church.



Boat of Osiris, featuring other gods of the Amdwat: Anubis, Set, and Horus

The wheel of the chariot of Krishna; and chariot temple of Vishnu, an aspect of Krishna. Temple of Vitala, Vijayanagara, India.

It is tempting to accept these beliefs as belonging to a bygone era, and yet in recent times even the psychologist Carl Jung succumbed to the bliss of the bridal chamber later in his life. He wrote of the experience, "Everything about me seemed enchanted . . . I was in the garden of pomegranates . . . at the bottom it was I myself: I was the marriage . . . there were ineffable states of joy. Angels were present and light."[16]

9

What Happens in the Middle East Stays in Central America

Artifacts unearthed in and around the temple city of Teotihuacan place a culture in what is today central Mexico over twelve thousand years ago, while in the Yucatan peninsula to the east, codices such as the Popul Vuh portray the Maya as the distant remnant of an advanced civilization displaced to the highlands of Guatemala by global catastrophes. The question is, from where did these people originate? And if the flood myth they describe is the same one that took place around 9703 BC, could the Maya have preserved some of the oldest initiation rituals on Earth?

Linguistic and artistic similarities abound between Central American people and their Middle-Eastern counterparts, particularly with regard to sacred things: the Mesopotamian fish-man-god Oaana appears in the Mayan word *oaana* (he who resides in water); *h-menes* (wise men) is also the name of an Egyptian man who became pharaoh circa 3100 BC, precisely at the time the land of the Ma‘ya‘ab is born and the famous Fourth World calendar of the people that bore its name was set in motion.

Akkadian words such as *ma* (place), *naa/nana* (mother), *kul* (seat), and *kun* (vagina) are interchangeable with the Mayan. The Yucatan temple of Kabah is an echo of the Egyptian spirit-body concept *ka-ba,* while the related esoteric Mysteries teachings of the spirit-body of God, *ka-baallah,* is found in the Mayan *ca-bala* (two hidden). *Ahau* (great spirit) is common to the ancient cultures of Egypt, New Zealand, and Easter Island and carries the same meaning in each case. Linguistics aside, late Mayan temples are

covered in effigies whose style bears surprising similarities to Hindu, Buddhist, and Balinese sacred art; a stone lintel at Lorillard depicts a man inserting a beaded cord through his tongue, in the style of worship of the god Kali, while the veneration of multiplatform pyramids with truncated tops is a decidedly Middle East practice. But of direct interest to our inquiry is the Mayan word *way* (spirit or soul) and *Waybil,* the Otherworld location where the soul resides.

The idea of a Mesoamerican temple culture with Eastern roots is more than a fanciful theory. There is ample evidence that people sailed westward across the Pacific in the third millennium BC. The *Chilam Balam* is even more specific; it claims the ancestors of the Maya arrived in Yucatan in 9600 BC from a place where the water "swallowed the fount of wisdom," a land named Atzantiha. Two beautiful lintels, from the temples of Palenque and Akab Oib (Uxmal), depict the arrival of the Mayan creator god Itzamna on a boat, amid drowning people, collapsing temples, mountains, and volcanoes. This god was a renowned master astronomer, mathematician, and teacher of the laws that underpin a civilized society—attributes that appear to be an amalgamation of the husband-wife-brother-sister creator gods of Japanese mythology, Izanami and Izanagi.

Some anthropologists have reasonably concluded that the peace-loving Maya were influenced by an incoming culture from the highlands of Guatemala, the Itzá, whose name derives from *itzam* (shaman, sorcerer), in other words, a person knowledgeable of the laws of nature who can connect with the source of things. And here begins the association between the Maya and the Otherworld.

The risen god-man as Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl.

The *Chilam Balam* refers to the first inhabitants of the Yucatan as *Ah-Canule* (People of the Serpent), followers of a rejuvenating god named Kukulkan who is depicted as a blue-green plumed serpent, also known to the Olmec by the name Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent).

Quetzalcoatl belongs to a golden age, a prehistoric time before a violent flood engulfed the Earth. Its cult was based on nonviolence, compassion, and humility.[1] It was also obsessed with the mysteries beyond life and death, for Quetzalcoatl was said to have made the journey into the Otherworld and returned to talk about it.[2] Certainly the story is ancient, because the Olmec, who were present in the Gulf of Mexico by 1500 BC, knew about it. And these peoples were under no illusion that this god had not also been a real man . . . for they describe him in the most unambiguous terms as "a fair and ruddy-complexioned man with a long beard . . . a mysterious person, a white man with strong body, broad forehead, large eyes . . . who came from across the ocean in a boat that moved by itself without paddles."[3]

Unlike the cult of Kukulkan practiced peacefully by the Maya, the Aztecs acquired Quetzalcoatl and turned it into one of history's most diabolical rituals. It is a paradox that a people who worshipped a god-man representing one of the highest spiritual ideals should have engaged in a

most barbaric savagery that culminated with the ritual slaughter of hundreds of thousands of victims every year—until the equally barbaric conquistadores arrived in Mexico in the sixteenth century and were so disgusted by what they witnessed that they banned the practice! But as it has been said, when the true understanding of a concept is lost, what remains is superstition, and in this the Aztecs are guilty of taking the teachings of the Otherworld ritual literally, for the concept of dismembering of the body was nothing more than the metaphoric flaying of the physical self to allow the soul to take flight and enter a paradisiacal landscape.

One of the many monuments erected in honor of Kukulkan is the nine-terraced pyramid at Chichén Itzá, depicting at the same time the great mound of creation and the number of levels of perfection required to reach the Otherworld. Every year the equinox sun interacts with the balustrade of its northeastern staircase, creating an expertly designed display of light and shadow that resembles a serpent rising up the pyramid. At this magic hour the serpent *kuxan sum* (the living cord), links the two worlds, just as the 'hollow reeds' at Persian, Japanese, and Native American sacred locations connect the earth to the Otherworld.

Recent excavations of this pyramid reveal it to be a later addition to an older temple, now reachable through a narrow doorway set into the grand staircase. A narrow passage reaches a dual central chamber where sits a jaguar—symbol of earth, of gravity, the feathered serpent's complementary opposite—carved from solid rock and painted in red cinnabar, the color used by the Maya to represent the rebirth of the soul, since it mimics the glow of twilight that precedes the reborn sun.

The Mayan spatial model was organized horizontally by the cardinal directions, and vertically by three tiers: an Upperworld, a Middleworld, and an Otherworld consisting of nine levels, a watery place where the forces of creation reside. They regarded access to this location as a difficult endeavor requiring the crossing of two rivers, not to mention an assortment of obstacles, to which end the *way*—the soul—required the services of a dog capable of seeing in the dark, just as Cŵn Annwn and Anubis fill the same shoes in the Welsh and Egyptian narratives.

The Mayan Otherworld is called Xibalba (firestone with the power to transform).[4] It was regarded as a land of plenty, reachable either during ceremony or when the soul inevitably departs from its fleshy vessel for

good. At the center of Xibalba stands a mighty *ceiba* tree, an *axis mundi* from which all knowledge emanates. It is a cruel irony that this tree should appear in stylized form on a mural at the temple of Palenque in the exact shape of a Christian cross, albeit hundreds of years before the Maya collided with Catholicism and its perverted version of the symbol, with disastrous consequences.

The Mayan shamans sought natural hot spots where this tree of knowledge pierces all tiers of existence, and used them to allow the *way* to travel to the Otherworld, where it gains access to deities, ancestors, and celestial forces. The shaman—an adept by any other name—opened this communication between the two worlds via an elaborate ritual that dissolved any limitation imposed on the body in the Middleworld, after which he was able to divine the future and allow the power of the supernatural to merge into daily activities.

The Mayan world tree, Wacah Chan, is found inside the sacred cave Balam-ka-ànché, its meandering roots, trunk, limbs, and canopy created from millennia of slow-dripping limestone until it formed an impressive stalagmite that seems to hold up the cave ceiling. In this dark, subterranean world countless initiates came to experience Xibalba, perhaps choosing this cave over thousands like it throughout the Yucatan precisely because its water-sculpted channels so resemble a female vulva and its fallopian tubes. Inside this sensory-deprived world the soul came to tangle with supernatural beings and pick the fruits of a tree of knowledge. Ledges cut long ago around Wacah Chan still contain dozens of small clay vessels that once were filled with offerings, incense, or narcotics.

That this specific cave was used as a bridal chamber is immortalized in a local legend that tells of a young man who wished to marry a young maiden, against the wishes of her mother; so he hid his beloved bride inside the cave, thus the origin of its alternative name, Xtacumbi (hidden lady).

The Mayan world tree, Wacah Chan, inside the sacred cave Balam-ka-ànché.

The strategic placement of major temples above such ritual caves became an extension of this practice. The Pyramid of Osario at Chichén Itzá is a late structure with an access hole on the summit that leads forty feet down via metal rungs into the original ritual cave, now totally enveloped by the man-made structure. It is worth noting that such pyramids are by and large aligned to the extreme risings of Venus, which to the Maya represented both the morning star and periodic renewal, and was the first

celestial object initiates were shown upon emerging from a restricted chamber.

Pyramid of Osario encompasses the original ritual cave.

Since there are two other temples at Chichén Itzá sharing identical alignments, let's see if the three are related to the same ritual.

The Mayan universe was suffused with sacredness to the point where their secular and spiritual worlds were fused. Temple cities represented the conceptualization of a cosmos whose principles were both logical and harmonious, with sacred buildings designed and placed accordingly. One of their favorite devices was to link structures sharing common purposes in perfect triangles.[5] To the north of the Pyramid of Osario stands the imposing Temple of the Jaguar. The eight surfaces of its lower room act as a teaching device about the Creation; its central figure wields a mirror, the totem used to gaze into the Otherworld, indicating how this individual has replicated the cosmos within himself and as such has earned the right to be a mediator between the worlds. The open-fronted room is guarded by a stone jaguar staring out across the long court of Chichén Itzá and beyond—

toward the southernmost rising of Venus as well as the winter solstice sunrise.

Staring back from a high platform is a *chac mool,* a stone effigy reclining in a very uncomfortable position on its back, with a plate resting on his sacral chakra as though meant to hold Venus or the rising sun when they rise above the horizon.

Together, these three structures form a perfect right-angle triangle and, given the related symbolism, appear to have shared a function in the living resurrection ritual.

The cult of Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl sought nothing less than spiritual transfiguration. This was to be achieved through a mixture of mental tests and an ascetic lifestyle aimed at removing oneself from physical attachments—a flaying of the self—so that this "precious stone and rich feather," as the Maya referred to the soul, could access a finer level of being.[6] The process required the initiate to undergo a symbolic death and rebirth—just as Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl once did for four days inside a box made of stone,[7] after which he rose, "cried, seized his garments, and put on his insignia of feathers. . . . Then when he was adorned he set fire to himself and burned . . . his ashes once raised up, and . . . all the rare birds appeared . . . for which reason in eight days there appeared the great star called Quetzalcoatl."[8]

Like Osiris this individual becomes a god, a shining star. And just as Osiris and Orion share a symbiotic relationship in the Egyptian resurrection narrative, so the Maya venerate Orion as the cosmic hearth, the womb of the universe, and the point of arrival for souls journeying in and out of the Otherworld.[9]

To add weight to the evidence that the living resurrection ritual was a key component of teachings undertaken at Chichén Itzá, a mural in the Temple of the Jaguar appears to describe the story of a mythical figure, Queen Moo, and it bears an uneasy similarity to the myth of Osiris and his wife-sister, Isis.

Once upon a time Queen Moo presided at said temple city with her husband-brother, Prince Coh. Together they were given the epithets Ozil and Idzin, the Mayan words for 'love/desire,' and 'younger sister.'[10] This prince, like Osiris, was murdered by his brother. To add another layer, *coh*

is Mayan for ‘leopard,’ a creature not far removed from the jaguar, the totem of the material world who aspires to become a feathered serpent following a spiritual transfiguration. Osiris was himself depicted as a crouching leopard, while the leopard skin was traditionally worn by risen Egyptian adepts, not to mention the attending priests of Amenti, the custodians of the secrets of the Amdwat.

As for Queen Moo, not only does she share characteristics with Isis—they marry their brothers and use birds for totems, the macaw and the vulture, respectively—but Isis, being associated with the seasonal flooding of the Nile, was consequently referred to as Mw, the Egyptian word for water.

Since no archaeological evidence has unearthed vestiges of Queen Moo and her prince, it is likely the story represents a spiritual ideal rather than real, living people. Then again, it was not uncommon for rulers of Yucatan, or elsewhere, to take on the mantle of earlier mythical heroes. A goodly number are known to have taken the title Quetzalcoatl to represent their spiritual status—deserved or otherwise—or to set an example to others or promulgate an ideal.

Kukulkan’s example of self-renewal paved the way for future seekers, and the ritual required to follow in his footsteps appears to have been reenacted elsewhere throughout the region. At the temple-city of Copan, seven 12-foot-tall stelae chronicle the life of its shaman-king Waxaklanhun Ub’ah K’awil, recording his negotiation with the Otherworld along with those of his associates. Stela C marks the ruler’s first interaction and his subsequent regeneration as shaman-king, which coincided with the first rising of Venus. The king’s visage is carved equinoctially upon the east and west faces of the monolith, while holding the staff of the dual-headed serpent. As he becomes the physical embodiment of the world tree so his loin apron acts as the foundation of its roots, while from said apron emerges the narcotic blue water lily.

This unusual apron motif was also employed in an identical ancient Egyptian ritual, which we shall examine later.

At one of the oldest inhabited Mayan temple-cities, Oxkintok, there is an unusual rectangular building by the name of Tzat Tun Tzat. Set in the west side of the complex, it was once described as an artificial cave without end, its vaulted tunnels connected by small gates and narrow stairs, giving

the impression of an ancient labyrinth, the purpose of which was for a candidate to fumble his or her way in the dark so as to physically experience the journey of the discombobulated soul through the Otherworld. The concept is identical to the story of Theseus, the Cretan hero.

Like the Hypogeum in Malta, Tzat Tun Tzat consists of three ascending levels of tunnels, with the ceiling of the lower level set deliberately low to remind the candidate to proceed in humility; access to the upper, and progressively taller, tunnels is made through a pivoting stone in each ceiling. Finally he reemerges risen through a gateway aligned to the equinox sunrise.

Such a 'death' explains why Brother Antonio de Ciudad Real, who noted the customs of the Maya during the Conquista, came to misunderstand the purpose behind this temple as "a place where they tossed those who had committed great offenses so that there they may die."[11]

Not far from Oxkintok rises the impressive temple-city of Uxmal. Inside one finds a quadrangle of elaborately decorated buildings, inappropriately named by Spanish priests as the Nunnery. In reality it once served as an academy for healers, mathematicians, and astronomers. The south or entrance building is called Itzam Nah (Shaman House), and a glance along the upper molding reveals stucco reliefs of small flowers called *itz* (blessed or magic substance), particularly when handled by an itzam (shaman), thus identifying the building as a place where ritual was conducted; a cross-hatching of *X*s indicates the building as a place of restricted access. Above each of its eight doorways sits a stone effigy called a *xanil nah* (reed house), which acts as a kind of spirit or false door.

A xanil nah or false door.

The name bears an uncanny linguistic resemblance to *jannah,* the Persian concept of paradise, which is entered via eight hidden gates into a place of reeds; the same concept appears in Egyptian tradition. In fact there may exist another interconnection here, because the point of origin in Mesoamerican myth is called Tollan (Place of Cattail Reeds), and to reach it one had to cross a body of water.[12] In this sacred location people learned the arts, writing, astronomy, and all the elements that constitute a civilized life. Mayan postclassic literature claims that rulers would go there and obtain from the gods the credentials with which to govern by hallowed appointment.

Opposite the south house stands a matching, taller building, focal point of the quadrangle. The inclusion of double-headed serpents above each of its xanil nah reinforces the association with heavenly regeneration (*sky* and *serpent* share the same Mayan word). Above the central door, the goggle-eyed mask of Itzam-Ye stares back at the viewer, superimposed with a secondary mask of large ringed eyes called *ch'ok* (young person), indicating that whoever enters this building returns newborn.

Double mask of Itzam-Ye.

Last but not least, the inner face of the quadrangle features 584 crosses, the number of years it takes the star of rebirth, Venus, to appear in the same place in the sky as observed from Earth.

Overall, the quadrangle defines an area set apart from the rest of Uxmal as though meant for a very select few.

Yet the concept of the initiates' Otherworld journey was not limited to the temple-cities of the Yucatan. On the peninsula's eastern shore, the temple of Tulum faces the open waters of the Caribbean and the equinox sunrise. One hundred and ninety-eight miles away on the opposite side, the

Otherworld theme is completed on the island of Jaina, where a stepped pyramid shares the same latitude as Tulan and faces the equinox sunset. Jaina means 'Temple in the Water,' and its linguistic similarity to the Persian *jannah* and *jinn* is inescapable. Jaina is the quintessential island in the West, the place from where the soul commences its journey across the water, and later, where over 20,000 people came to be buried, each one interred with a hollow figurine with holes to be used as a whistle to help the soul navigate the inky darkness of the Otherworld.

It is as though on the Yucatan the Maya created two doorways between worlds, and the invisible umbilical cord connecting the two influenced their homeland and the temple-cities in-between, a complete and predesigned ritual landscape.

PLAYING BALL WITH THE OTHERWORLD

Like other ancient spiritual cultures, the Olmec and the Maya erected stone monuments that gave visual interpretation to the mechanics of the universe. One such unique feature is the so-called ball court where, according to orthodox view, warriors played a gruesome game with the severed heads of defeated enemies, yet not a shred of historical or archaeological evidence exists in support of this theory.

There are more than eight ball courts at Chichén Itzá alone, but the one in the northwest section is the most impressive. Referred to as *hom,* the unusual structure, with its steep walls and absence of spectator seating, illustrates the Mayan concept of how life emerges from a crack in the mound of creation.

Hom means both 'crevice' and 'ball court', a word that pays homage to *om* and how sound or vibration is central to the act of creation.

The playing area is laid out to a near 4:1 ratio, a double octave in music. This acoustical tuning makes echoes rebound seven times off its lofty vertical walls. Each wall features a stone ring exactly 3×7 units (three octaves) above the ground, carved with intertwined feathered serpents; eyes fill the gaps between the coils, so that the ball penetrating the ring becomes

the object with which to ‘peer’ into the Otherworld. The sound reference is reinforced in the south temple and its seven doorways.

Running the length of the court are two intricately carved panels depicting players in what appears, to the untrained eye, a gruesome game. The central player in particular has no head; seven wriggling snakes rise out of his severed neck, each representing the creative elements of light and sound; the sixth serpent carries the name Wacah Chan, the tree from which all sacred knowledge emanates. At the player’s feet sits a large ball with a skull encircled by a *way*—a soul.

None of these esoteric symbols has any purpose in a place allegedly built for warriors to play soccer with the head of a decapitated enemy. They do, however, convey a story of the regenerative act of creation, with the ball court as a sacred instrument, a focal place for a spiritual drama to be played out by initiates who visualized its mechanics and learned to embody them.

Another name given to the ball court was Tlach-tli (the looking place) leading to speculation that under certain conditions the court was used as a place to observe the perpetual motion of heavenly bodies, and from this, their link with human destiny. Certainly the friezes depict a cylindrical Mercator projection of the planes around the zodiac, tracing a path of planets above and below the horizon, in effect depicting a figurative ball game of the gods. Even the slope angle of the outer court wall is an unusual 23°, the mean axial tilt of the Earth, a concept also embodied in the Egyptian Djed pillar, which was believed to represent the backbone of life itself.

Ball court frieze depicting decapitated man, with a way or soul inside the large ball.

As a metaphor—and Mysteries schools always spoke in metaphors—this looking place describes the ball court as a place where one peers into the Otherworld. By day, players carried mirrors on their backs as a reminder they are reflections of the perfection of the heavens. The idea of the game was to amass enough points to reach the center of the field, *teocalli* (home of the gods)—the reference to the Hindu goddess of knowledge and periodic renewal notwithstanding. Thus when players worked the ball court they interacted with a creative deity so as to learn the greatest game of all, the game of life—not as it appears to the 'dead,' but how it actually exists, knowledge that only the 'risen' are privy to.

The area of the ball court mirrors the numerical values of the adjacent pyramid of Kukulkan, divided as it was into 99 squares, the number of years when the solar and lunar calendars calibrate, a numerical reminder to each candidate that the perfected human is the sum of the masculine and feminine. Some folk dances of Mexico are faint echoes of this bipolar drama.

No wonder the ball court itself was seen as a figurative entrance into the Otherworld: the winner discovered the Mysteries of the cosmos, and by

this connection with all levels of reality, the individual was enlightened.

With its playing area divided into squares, the Mayan ball court may be a variation of the board game of chess. Like the moves of the ball player, the unusual moves of each chess piece depict the motions of creation. The connection between the game and the ball courts of Yucatan is that in 600 BC chess reached Persia, referenced in a romance called *Karnamak-i-Artakshatr-i-Papakan,* whose hero is noted for his unusual abilities in, of all things, ball play.

The ball game of the Maya was a metaphor of the regenerative cycle of nature, and the person who understood its mechanics overcame the repetitive cycle of fate. For them the game was one of *symbolic* warfare. The arrival of conquistadores brought about the destruction of Mesoamerican culture by warfare of another kind, even though by then a change in climate plus the introduction into Yucatan of military conflict by the Toltec and Aztec meant that the metaphysical meaning of the ball game became corrupted. One man's god becomes another's devil. And when arrogant white Europeans, disconnected from the true nature of things, descended upon the Maya, they took the unusual friezes along the ball court literally rather than understanding their true significance—that the theater of human existence is a symbolic ball game of the gods, and the only difference between the two is flesh.

THE ASTRONAUT OF LA VENTA'S HANDBAG

One of the most controversial archaeological discoveries in the Olmec world concerns a unique carving of what ancient alien theorists adamantly believe to be an astronaut riding a space capsule. The fact that the object in question is in the shape of a rattlesnake does not seem to faze them.

The serpent has always been a culturally shared symbol of telluric energy as well as its rejuvenating power. In Central America it has also come to represent the periodic rebirth of god-men such as Kukulkan and Quetzalcoatl, and the real-life people who followed their example who are shown being consumed by, dressed as, even emerging out of the mouth of a serpent. Applying this understanding to the Olmec stela instantly transforms

what we see: a very relaxed individual inside a chamber, wrapped by a protective serpent. This Olmec astronaut appears to be traveling, nay flowing toward another reality, an initiate embarking on an Otherworld journey to become as a god, a Kukulkan.

The astronaut of La Venta holding his container.

But that's not the real mystery here, for in his hand he holds what some call a handbag, and others, a container. At this point our story loops back to the Middle East, for a close look at the rattlesnake's head reveals a feathered crown, the same one depicted on the head of Sumerian anthropomorphic winged figures called Apkallu, a group of seven emissaries from a creator god entrusted with bringing the civilizing arts to humanity following a catastrophic flood. Their story is repeated almost verbatim in the diluvial myths of most ancient cultures on Earth, the only changing aspect being their names.

The quintessential image of an Apkallu is one of an eagle-, or perhaps a falcon-headed person standing by a flowering tree, picking its fruit with one hand and holding a *banduddû*—a container—in the other. This container is identical to the one held by our Olmec journeyman despite both cultures being half a world apart.

Apkallu *with container at the Tree of Knowledge.*

The manner in which the banduddû is held suggests that the fruit are to be placed in said receptacle. Sometimes the figure of the supreme deity Ahura Mazda is depicted inside a winged disc above the axis of the fruit tree, implying the tree is close to God, and thus, wisdom. It is the World Tree or Tree of Knowledge to which countless risen god-men have metaphorically been attached or nailed.

The iconic container appears in carved panels and clay tablets discovered throughout Mesopotamia. Placed in context and viewed together they appear to form a kind of triptych conveying a running commentary. Such a series of panels, removed from one of the rooms of the palace at Nimrud, is housed in the British Museum. One panel shows two Apkallu

administering to the sacred tree; in the next, an Apkallu has turned from the tree and bestows a king with the tree fruit, all the while holding that mysterious container. Clearly, the king—identified as Ashunarsipal—is conferred some special privilege.

In a following panel Ashunarsipal is no longer surrounded by the Apkallu; he himself has been transformed into a winged figure holding a tree fruit as well as the container. In the adjacent image he stands in direct contact with the Tree of Knowledge and points directly at Ahura Mazda inside his winged disc. Obviously the king is privy to restricted material that provides him a means of approach to God, the kind of information only a priest or high initiate of the temple would know. As it turns out, Ashunarsipal was both. We know this because in a separate frieze he is depicted holding a beehive above his head, a clear indication he has been initiated into its secrets.

What links Ashunarsipal to the Olmec astronaut is the banduddû, for it identifies each holder with a privileged position, in other words the container is a symbol that marks its owner as being in possession of transcendental information. In various Sumerian friezes and clay seals, the first Apkallu—a fish-man named Uan, later transliterated to Ou-anna, Oannes, and John—is also shown holding the banduddû in one hand and a scroll bearing information from the gods in the other.

Part of the key to this unfolding story concerns that other object held by the Apkallu, namely the *mullilu* (tree fruit). Some speculate that the object is a pine cone, and the observation appears valid. However, a closer look at the classic depiction of the Apkallu at the Tree of Knowledge clearly shows the creatures *picking* the fruit from a tree that in no way resembles a pine, thus the two items are at odds. The tree is clearly of a flowering variety, and the one that best suits the description throughout the Middle East is the pomegranate tree. Could the mullilu held by the Apkallu be a pomegranate and its calyx, a fruit that when sliced in half is somewhat reminiscent of a pine cone, and if so, does it add to our understanding of the container as a symbol of the Otherworld?

“About the pomegranate I must say nothing,” whispered the geographer Pausanias in the second century, “for its story is somewhat of a holy mystery.” And he was right. In symbolism and mythology, the pomegranate’s role is that of point of contact between our world and that of

the gods. In Greek myths it appears in the story of Persephone as the metaphor of rebirth as well as the cycle of nature, after Persephone marries the god Hades and is given six pomegranate seeds as her only source of nutrition during her six months in the Otherworld. The story carries obvious astronomical overtones, but more to the point, if one notices the wristband of the Apkallu picking the tree fruit, it features six seeds. And in sacred art every detail carries meaning.

Ashunarsipal holding beehive.

Apkallu *offering Ashunarsipal the fruit of knowledge.*

Incidentally, Persephone's mother, Demeter, was the presiding goddess of Greek temples where the living resurrection ritual was performed following ingestion of a mild narcotic. The pomegranate, given its comparable shape and chambered interior, is a surrogate for a poppy's narcotic capsule.

In a similar Greek myth, Orion is wedded to Side, whose name means 'pomegranate.' Since the myth is based on the older story of Osiris, whom the Egyptians identified with Orion, a link is established between the tree fruit and the resurrected individual. The pomegranate is similarly associated with the Olympian goddess Hera, whose crown is the shape of the calyx of this fruit.

As we have already seen, the Greek resurrection ritual was a continuation or adaptation of earlier Zoroastrian Mysteries tradition and the induced near-death experience of *pairi daeza,* the original model for the Christian paradise. The pomegranate plant and its fruit were respected in

the Zoroastrian ritual because it was the sacred plant inhabiting this Garden of Eden. Since the plant is evergreen throughout the year, naturally it became a figurative representation of the perfection of nature, not to mention the immortality of the soul, the prime objective of initiates in all the world's Mysteries schools—a concept encapsulated in Persian mythology with the hero Isfandiyar who eats a pomegranate and becomes invincible. It is this tradition that King Ashunarsipal would have been privy to.

It seems that wherever the container appears it is associated with Otherworldly knowledge, and by implication the container becomes the receptacle of that knowledge, while identifying its holder as the individual possessing the knowledge. By their very nature as intermediaries between worlds, the Apkallu materialized already equipped with such wisdom; for humans, on the other hand, it required the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge to journey into the Otherworld and return as a god.

The anthropomorphic bird feature of the Apkallu immediately suggests an eagle, or more likely a falcon, following the Egyptian model of the falcon gods Horus and Seker. What links this train of thought to our main inquiry is the initial phase of the ritual, which began with a baptism, and where the container makes another appearance.

In Sumerian rituals, real-life banduddû were filled with water by an Apkallu priest who is instructed by the god Ea to "take the bucket, the hoisting device with the wooden bail, bring water from the mouth of the twin rivers, over that water cast your holy spell, purify it with your holy incantation, and sprinkle that water over the man, the son of his god."[13] The net effect of sprinkling this sanctified water was *ptr*—a 'release' of disharmony from the recipient, in what is undoubtedly one of the oldest descriptions of a ritual baptism. In Babylonian times only a high-ranking adept called a *nasiru*—a title meaning 'preserver of secret knowledge'—was entrusted with this task. The tradition endured for a considerable period because it came to be practiced by a later nasiru, a certain John the Baptist.

Was the banduddû a metaphorical vessel for restricted knowledge? Perhaps. A good number of physical containers made of stone or clay have been unearthed, some measuring a mere six inches, each adorned with all manner of motifs: entwined serpents, lions feasting on a bull, a woman holding two serpents, a falcon, a doorway flanked by entwined spirals, a

wall of gates, and so forth. Anyone versed in the Mysteries secrets immediately recognizes the symbolic visuals as representative of teachings that led initiates toward a state of enlightenment. These false containers—for they have no practical use—may have once served as mnemonic devices used in restricted environments.

If the banduddû really is emblematic of the repository of knowledge of the Otherworld, then its echo is heard yet again across time and space in the story of another famous receptacle containing the laws of the universe—the Ark of the Covenant.

10

Geezers of Nazareth

Egypt was the perennial storehouse of occult and pagan spiritual ideas long forbidden in Jewish religion, so much so that, according to one early tradition, when John the Baptist returned from there charged with a prophetic mission offering self-discovery, his path was regularly impeded by temple authorities in Judea.

After a period of seclusion in the wilderness to discover himself, John returned to a working life in Bethesda and advised new candidates to "prepare for The Way." His ritual baptisms—an initial component on the path to living resurrection—offered liberation to a populace long excluded from contact with gnosis by a conservative religious establishment. To orthodox keyholders what John was doing was nothing short of scandalous, and yet to the masses, the Baptist's message rang a bell because the faith he professed was nothing new, in fact it was a return to an older, outlawed practice.

Fortunately the establishment's censoring did not entirely succeed. His followers went on to become the Mandeans who, despite ongoing Christian persecution, still survive to this day as the Natzoraje in southern Iraq, along with their most prized possession, the Book of John, the gospel of their preeminent spiritual teacher. As we saw earlier, the Mandean ritual incorporated the bridal chamber, as well as a particular emphasis on flowing or living water during baptism. Only two adepts of the Mysteries are known to have used this technique—one was John the Baptist.

The other was Jesus. For a guy who inspired a centralized religious movement, albeit without his consent, little is known about him, and even

that little is a lot misunderstood. For centuries the church has tried to paint him as an itinerant Mediterranean peasant who heralded from Nazareth, and yet neither the city nor the synagogue depicted in Christian scripture actually existed at the time. The entire area appears to have been a hamlet consisting of nothing more than a few hovels and former cave dwellings.[1]

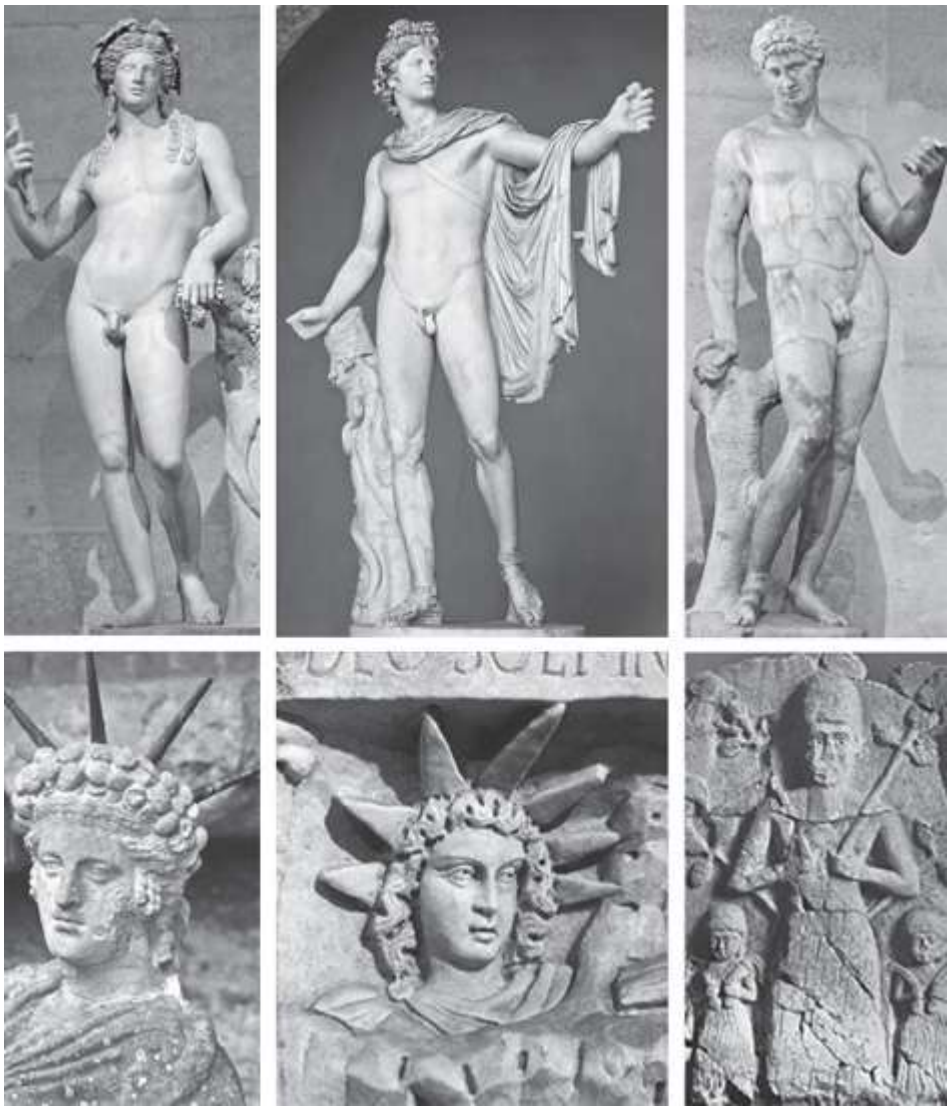
In reality Jesus was far more than that. The Mandean texts categorically state that he broke away from John the Baptist's school to fashion his own. This caused much consternation among the sect because they accused Jesus of openly teaching many of the Mandeans' secret doctrines. However, his actions and esoteric teachings betray his true spiritual roots to not one singular creed but many, including the initiation methods of the house of Isis and Osiris.[2] Jesus, like Osiris, even compares himself to "the bright and morning star," referring to Venus.[3]

What is known is that in his later years Jesus belonged to a Gnostic brotherhood linked to both the Mandeans and the Essenes—the Nasurayi ('guardians of secret rites and knowledge'), and their hometown was not Nazareth but Cochaba.[4] Jesus's unique methods of initiation indicate he'd once been a magus at the highest level of Mandean initiation, a position that carried the title nasoraiyi, and the way in which initiates came to adopt this title was through a rite of passage performed in a bridal chamber, after which they were officially qualified to administer that most secret of rites, the living resurrection.[5]

Persian magi actually regarded Jesus as the latest embodiment of Zoroaster, whom they saw as a reincarnating prophet who changes his name, form, and appearance through the ages on his voyage to master the secrets of nature. Jesus was claimed to be the thirteenth and final such incarnation.

A true Piscean, Jesus was born on March 1. The mere mention of this heresy is sure to have your name struck from every dinner party hosted by latter-day Christians. But your days in societal purgatory will be compensated by the joy of knowing that even the medieval church was aware of this fact, and only in the fourth century was Jesus awarded a birth date wedded to the winter solstice. At the time, the reason was a practical one: wishing to corral pagans into this new religion, the emperor Constantine—a worshipper of Mithras—took the celebration of Jesus and amalgamated it with a goodly number of pagan traditions of gods who

regenerated themselves around the time of the winter solstice—Apollo, Dyonisus, Adonis, Attis, Tammuz—but especially Mithras, a god-man whose birth in a cave was attended by shepherds, and who took a last supper before undergoing a ritual death.



Definitely BC: the resurrected gods Dyonisus, Apollo, Adonis, Attis, Mithras, Tammuz.

OSIRIS AND JESUS, SEPARATED AT BIRTH

Not forgetting, of course, Osiris, whose dismembered body is restored by his consort, Isis, to reemerge three days after the winter solstice as Horus, the infant who sits on the lap of Isis—later transferred into Christian imagery as the god-child Jesus sitting on the lap of Mary.

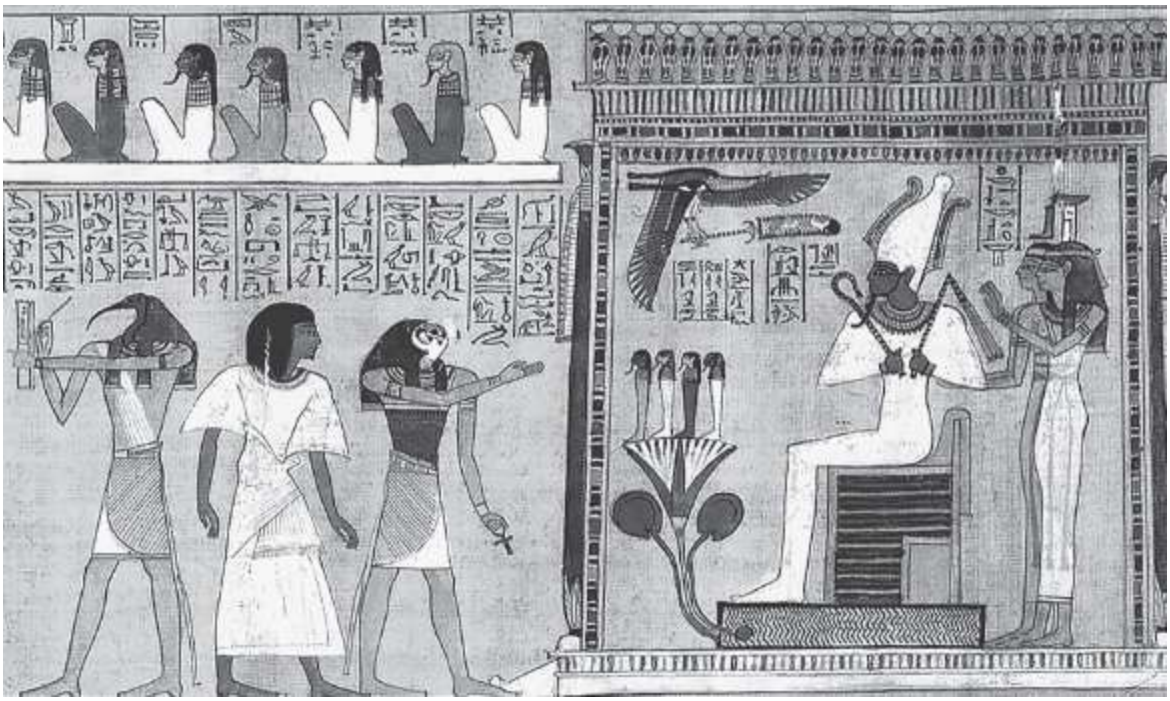
Let us now come full circle to the solar hero—the candidate who undertakes a figurative death, is awakened to the Great Mystery, and returns from the Otherworld transfigured as a bright star. Gnostic sects wholeheartedly believed in living resurrection as a tool for self-discovery, and initiates who mastered it were described as the Great Illuminated. In doing so they took their place alongside the lineage of priest-kings of the Neolithic era, the Horus pharaohs and sun kings—truly awakened heroes deserving the epithet Sons of God.

The Divine Virgin, in her many guises.

In reality, to be proclaimed a Son of God is to disclose one's highest grade of initiation. In the language of the temple, the neophyte carried the title 'son of woman,' followed by 'son of man,' from whence one graduated as an initiate of cosmogonic science to become a 'son of the gods,' culminating in total illumination, which came with the title 'Son of God.'[6]

An original Son of God is Osiris, the hero who shed his material attachment to the body, mastered the Otherworld, transfigured his soul, resurrected as a bright star, and became like a god. Osiris is the very personification of the god-man. He is the hero of his personal ritual, and by way of a perk he also gets to preside over the entrance into Sekhet Aaru (‘field of reeds’), otherwise known as paradise.

Not surprisingly, Osiris becomes the role model for subsequent solar heroes, one of the most recent being Jesus Christ, which we now know to be not a real name but a symbolic Greek title, Iessous Christós, essentially meaning “I am an anointed man spiritualized by knowledge of God.” It’s an archetypal title for an initiate of the Mysteries who has learned to transmute their carnal nature into spiritual enlightenment and truly experienced the mind of God so as to understand the laws of celestial mechanics.



Osiris, guardian of the gate into Sekhet Aaru, or paradise.

If one reads the official gospels with an open mind, the events surrounding the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus look highly dubious if taken literally. An accumulation of recent evidence overwhelmingly posits an alternate view: that he underwent a *symbolic* death followed by a living resurrection.[7] Even the Qur‘an categorically

states this and, as we already know, so do the Gnostic gospels.[8] Read with a gnostic eye the story actually begins to make sense. In the lead-up to events, like all god-kings, Jesus is anointed with the expensive ointment spikenard by a priestess consecrated to the temple—in this case Mary Magdala[9]—in preparation for his 'burial' in a cave, in accordance with the rules of the bridal chamber ceremony. As Jesus states, "She has anointed my body beforehand for burying."[10] He's the solar hero readying himself for a ritual death only to later rise from the dead, essentially performing an act of regicide commonly reenacted throughout history, and in the manner of the mystery play of Osiris.

There exists a second connection, this time a linguistic one, between the concept of Jesus as a christed human, the god-man Osiris, and the limestone plateau of Giza.

When expressing divinity on Earth in linguistic terms, the letter *G* is often prefixed to a name, as in *G*eb, Lord of Earth, and *G*aia, the Earth Mother. In this respect the name Giza or Gisa is very revealing, named as it is for one of the oldest known expressions of Isis: Isa. By grounding her name, the *G*isa plateau becomes 'the earthly embodiment of Isis.'

Interestingly, Jesus in Arabic is also called Isa.

Giza in modern Egyptian also means 'proximity', implying that whatever is placed there is close to Isis. Since one of its man-made structures is the Great Pyramid—otherwise known as the House of Osiris—we are being told that this iconic temple and its inner chambers is a place where the sacred marriage is performed, where a mortal travels to the Otherworld as a single man, unites with the bride, and returns a god-man. Could this be why ancient Egyptians referred to the Great Pyramid as "the place of ascension"?

It could be argued, then, that Giza is a place of transformation, where a living human ascends, undergoes an alchemical transfiguration, and becomes like a god. The initiate is spiritualized and, like Jesus and so many other initiates, has risen from the dead.

It has been convincingly argued that young Jesus spent many of his formative years immersed in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, and if so this explains the font of so many of his esoteric ideas,[11] not to mention why this period of his life is absent from the official Bible. His teacher John the

Baptist once remarked, “The kingdom of God is close at hand,”[12] implying that heaven is nearer to the material world than we are often led to believe. Like the shamanic perspective, the phrase identifies the realm of the Otherworld as being but a breath away from the waking world of perception. In the initiatory practices of the Nazorites and the Essenes—with whom John the Baptist was intimately connected—all that was required to experience this kingdom was the ability to let go of the waking state and delve into a subconscious reverie inside a suitable environment. And one tale that exemplifies such an interaction with the Otherworld is the Old Testament story of Jacob’s Ladder.

Jacob undertakes a journey to Harran, and as night approaches he fashions himself a comfortable pillow made of a large stone and falls asleep. In his dream he sees a long ladder, one end touching the earth, the other rising toward the sky, with a multitude of shining beings ascending and descending. Jacob then sees God, at which point he is told he shall one day inherit the land in which he sleeps. When Jacob wakes up he discovers he’s been lying in a sacred place all along. “This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate to heaven.” He rises, brushes off the overnight dew, and raises his stone pillow upright, henceforth to be named Bethel, literally ‘the house of God.’

Jacob ascends into the Otherworld thanks to a ladder.

This seemingly innocuous parable conveys a wealth of information to anyone versed in the symbolic language of the Mysteries. The stone used by Jacob for a pillow and raised upright is known throughout Europe as a *betyl* or *betilo;* in Celtic lands it is *menhir,* in India *Sivalingam,* and all such megaliths are said to contain or house the energy of a natural or godly force. They also share another aspect: they all mark the intersecting paths of the Earth's telluric pathways of energy,[13] the very forces capable of inducing altered dream states.

Whether Jacob's story is historically accurate or plain myth is beside the point. What is important is that it conveys a valuable lesson: that a person who interacts in a meditative manner with a hot spot of energy is capable of experiencing the Otherworld, and where such special places occur on the surface of the Earth they are commemorated by an upright stone, a passage mound, a temple, a pyramid, a dolmen, or a stupa.

It is also significant that the town where the story takes place, Harran, just happened to be the home of the Sabeans (from *saba'ia,* meaning 'wise or star people'), an esoteric sect known to have indulged in secret initiation ceremonies, one being an annual pilgrimage to the pyramids of Giza, because the Sabeans claimed the buildings brought them into proximity with the stars, not unlike Jacob's own journey into the Otherworld.

A small menhir. Dol, France.

ALL ONE GEEZER?

Which brings us to Giza's namesake, Gisors, a town in northern France featuring a most unusual church dedicated to Saint-Gervais-Saint-Portais, whose ground was consecrated in 1119, the very year the Knights Templar came into existence—officially, at least.[14] As it happens the church *is* intimately connected with the knights, as is an adjacent conical mound, itself a sacred site up until Roman times.

During the Second World War the Luftwaffe bombed Gisors. One blast near the church opened a hole into a crypt. Dedicated to St. Catherine,

patron of the Templars, this room was rumored to have been part of the knight's bridal chamber rituals. Excavations in the 1960s proved the existence of a passage linking this underground room with the nearby artificial mound and its own subterranean chamber, which at one point was accessed by a kind of well that appears designed not to draw water. Who created this elaborate engineering project and why is a matter of speculation. However, it is known that Gisors has, since the fourteenth century, been thought to be one repository of the Templar treasure, part of which was temporal—they had by then amassed huge financial wealth—while the other was spiritual in nature, a secret related to a ritual zealously guarded by the knights.[15]

Mound and Templar castle. Gisors.

Evidence shows the Templars consisted of two very different groups: a general brotherhood that took care of temporal matters, and a selective inner brotherhood that conducted its affairs more like a ministerial college. One of the functions of the latter was the enactment of a ritual of raising the

dead. Knights wishing to be admitted into this selective group even swore an oath of secrecy that contained the phrase, “I, wishing to come into the joys of Paradise . . .”

Hardly the kind of vow one makes to become a warrior!

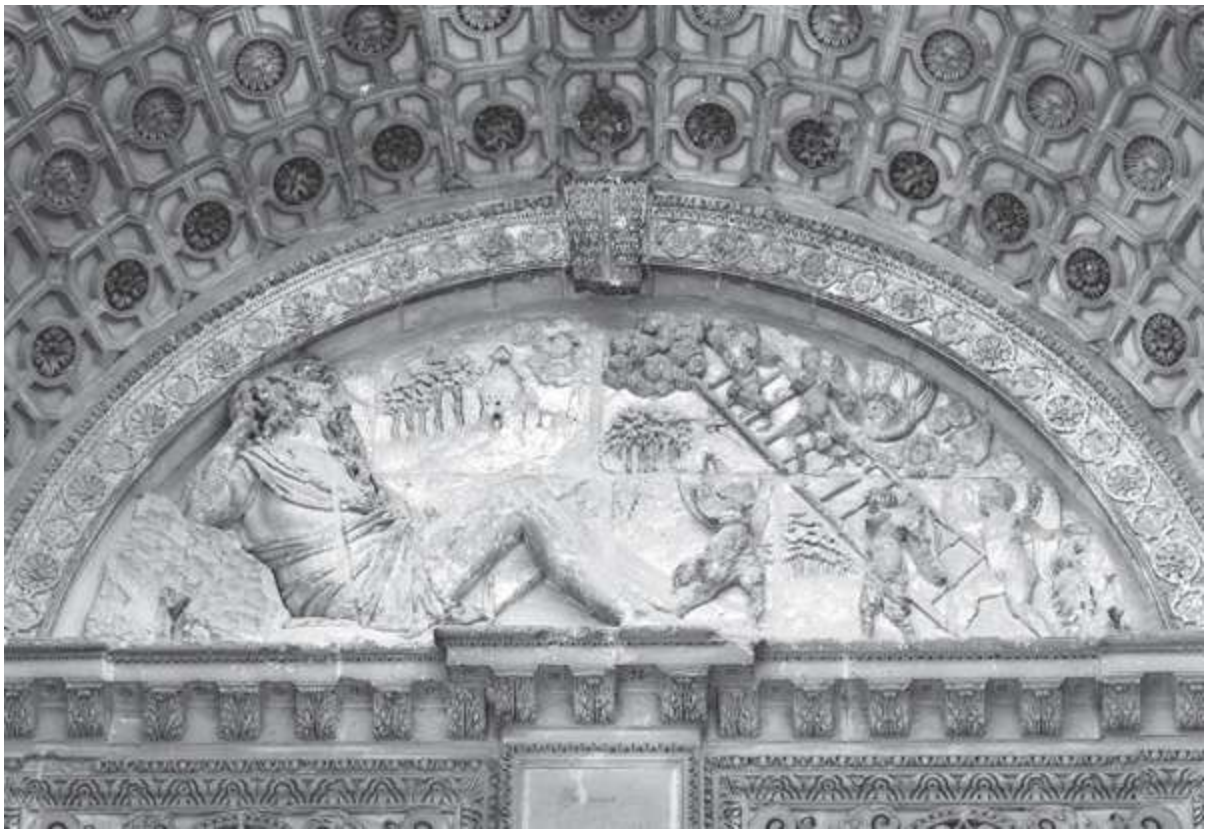
In this, the ritual, the church, and the mound at Gisors are all linked. It is feasible that candidates would have been prepared for initiation in the crypt—one of many discovered beneath Templar places[16]—then led along the connecting passage to the bridal chamber beneath the sacred mound where they would journey to the Otherworld before being roused to greet the sunrise on the summit. To anyone who’s experienced similar environments—the Pyramid of Unas, for example—this processional format is all too familiar. But the big clue that this actually took place in Gisors is found in the most unusual tympanum above the church’s main entrance, for it depicts, in no uncertain terms, Jacob and his ladder, as though identifying this sacred place as a gateway into the Otherworld.

Hearing the name Gisors, it is impossible to deny the audible similarity to Gesu, an original spelling of the title Jesus. As it turns out, the names Gisors, Gesu, Jesus, and even Osiris are related.

Gisors is a corruption of the Basque term *geezer,* ‘a man who comes from afar or in disguise,’ whose origin appears to precede Christianity.[17] It is unlikely the town was named for a simple stranger traveling from a distant place, but an exalted person journeying to and from another dimension, now *that* would be an event worth commemorating.

Geezer/Gesu/Jesu/Jesus bears a long etymological, historic, and geographic fingerprint. Its variants are *gaesa,* a Celtic oath or *taboo* (‘sacred, forbidden’); *gusi,* the cult of ancestral spirits followed by tribes in Borneo; *ge-ez,* the Ethiopian term for self-awareness; *aiza,* the guardian of the sacred shrines of Dahomey, and so on. These spiritual qualities then became the foundation of titles given to rulers representing the concept of the resurrected god-man. Examples include Gesar of Ling, a savior-god of Tibet circa 2500 BC who descended from heaven, slept in a cave, and restored order to the world; Jizo, a Japanese bodhisattva circa 1200 BC who built pyramids, assisted others on the path to enlightenment, was raised from the dead, and presides at the Temple of Ise; Geser Khan, sun king and epic hero of Mongolia; Esus, atoning god-man of Gaul circa 800 BC, crucified with a lamb at his side, and honored by the Canutissi (followers of

Isis); Hu-Esus, Celtic god born of a virgin, prince of the Otherworld; Iasius, young Cretan god who lay in a field with Demeter; Eshu, Nigerian god who brought heavenly knowledge; Iasar, the same in ancient Phoenicia; and finally (but not exhaustively) the European titles for exalted ruler—whether they deserved the epithet or not—czar, kaiser, and caesar.



Jacob's ladder on the tympanum of Gisors church.

So the resurrected god-man Jesus isn't just one guy but many, and far older than two thousand years. In fact the story of a child divinely conceived by a virgin, often son to a carpenter, who is saved from death in infancy, retires for a prescribed time to a wilderness in a sequestered location, undergoes a major suffering or death as an act of atonement, crosses into the Otherworld for three days to meet with discarnate spirits while his physical body remains incorruptible, then resurrects, becomes an example of a perfected individual who's deified as a god-man mediator, redeemer, intercessor, or messiah, is prevalent in most ancient religions and pagan traditions preceding Christianity.

The god-man savior of the Maya, Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl, was born of a virgin mother, indulged in a forty-day fast on a sacred mountain, atoned, rode an ass, and was purified in a temple with water and anointed with oil. Then, according to the Codex Borgianus and Codex Vaticanus, he was nailed to a cross on a sacred hill and crossed into the Otherworld for three days before resurrecting, after which he held the attribute Morning Star.

Similarly, Krishna—who was accepted as a real person as well as a god—was born in cave, saved from death in infancy, taught in a forest, and returned to be nailed to a tree in the shape of a cross, and was resurrected. There are 346 analogies between the story of Christ and Krishna alone.[18] Jesus's story gets even more riveting if we look at the origin of that other master of living resurrection, Osiris.

Osiris is actually a Greek translation of the Egyptian Asar. When Asar inherits the earthly kingdom he is united with his heavenly father Geb, so his name takes on the grounded form Gasar ('prince of the earth'). Gasar was also one of the original spellings of Giza, the others being Gesa, and Gesu, an original spelling of Jesus.

Giza represents the consummation of the sacred marriage between Gasar and Isa—Osiris and Isis—and the location where the two become one is the bridal chamber, otherwise known as the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid, that vast edifice and portal into the Otherworld.

Not bad for a geezer who came from the nasoraiyi.

11

Inside the Great Pyramid and into the Otherworld

It proved impossible to gain private access into the Great Pyramid that day. At best we would be sharing its claustrophobic inner passages with seventy or so overexcited tourists, their thinnest whispers amplified by the building's purposefully designed acoustics, their sweat by its high ambient humidity. It all seemed fruitless. We persevered nevertheless. It was barely seven in the morning. We didn't know it at the time but we were about to experience something previously reserved for initiates of the Mysteries.

Six of us made our way up the Grand Gallery and into the King's Chamber, its seamless, monolithic red granite blocks showcasing the ancient world's fluent ability to work the hardest stone on Earth like putty. The two women in the group felt suddenly uncomfortable and exited, taking with them a horde of tourists. Within minutes the three men and I had the chamber to ourselves, an incredible stroke of luck considering nowadays only a suitcase of *bakshish* can buy you quiet time in this wondrous monument. And yet, there we were, alone and silent as the grave.

Unexpectedly the lights switched off. We were consumed by total darkness in the core of the pyramid. Out of the four, Aaron and I had more experience in the ways of sacred space. We honored the spirit of place by toning in unison. A sinuous feeling between building and body overcame me, and sounds the likes of which I had never made before, or since, came out from my throat. As the others joined in, the natural acoustics brewed our voices into an intoxicating melody.

Looking up the Grand Gallery. Great Pyramid, Giza.

It was at this point that my life and my perception of temples changed forever. Emanating out of the granite walls came a group of tall people, all dressed in a type of white silk, encircling the chamber. I still remember turning my head to look at them all (remember, this is in total darkness); there must have been thirty or so. They bowed their heads, and I bowed mine. It felt like a reunion with a long lost family, I did not want them to go; my head filled with many questions to ask.

I don’t know how long this lasted, but it didn’t matter; we were in a conclave with magic.

No sooner had we stopped when two dim light bulbs glowed back to life. I looked across at the others, and although no words were exchanged I knew each of these people had also experienced something profound. We took turns lying inside the sarcophagus, ten minutes at a time. When my turn came I was concerned that, being so tall, I would be a bad fit. But no, the granite, softened by unknown tools and centuries of visitors, embraced my body like a pillow, the flat of my head to the soles of my feet being exactly the length of the receptacle, my shoulders its precise width. I remember making a mental note that I ought to get a bed made to these specifications on my return home.

I traveled far, visiting interesting people and extraordinary environments I’d never seen before, yet all felt familiar. In a matter of minutes, I had been transported to faraway universes and received important information. I had been offered a glimpse of what took place eons ago in the bridal chamber, where nameless initiates once savored the Otherworld. But out of respect for the tradition and its principles I cannot reveal any more of what I experienced.

What could be possible under more favorable conditions?

The House of Osiris: more a skyscraper, really.

Further chamber activity was curtailed by the sound of an adrenalized Arab voice hailing from somewhere deep below. We'd probably overstayed our welcome and decided to make haste. The bright desert light blinded our exit into the dense Cairo air. Aaron and I exchanged dazed glances; it was obvious we both wanted to say something, so I initiated the conversation: "Did you see what I saw up there?"

"You mean the priests, in a circle, all in white?"

You can't fake moments like this.

After my brief encounter with the Otherworld I came across a personal account by Paul Brunton, an early twentieth-century journalist who became dissatisfied with the credo of the modern world and walked the globe meeting philosophers, visiting sacred places, and writing copiously about his experiences along the way. It was while later reading of his travels in

Egypt that I stumbled upon his own personal experience in the Great Pyramid.

Learning of Brunton's intention to stay the night inside the temple, a local Arab friend warned him that "there is an army of ghosts and Genni in that territory."[1] Traditions of the Bedouin going back centuries do tell of lights regularly swirling around the pyramids, which they take to be guardian spirits. These lights spiral around several times before ascending to the apex where they discharge like a flame. Unperturbed, Brunton proceeded as planned. In total seclusion inside the silent, dark chamber Brunton at first felt trepidation and sensed he was surrounded by negative entities—much like the classic experiences described by initiates—but as he relaxed, the energy of the chamber changed in rhythm to his feelings. The following passage from his account took my breath away.

> I became conscious of a new presence in the chamber, of someone friendly and benevolent who stood at the entrance and looked down upon me with kind eyes. With his arrival the atmosphere changed completely. . . . He approached my stony seat, and I saw that he was followed by another figure. Both halted at my side and regarded me with grave looks, pregnant with prophetic meaning. I felt that some momentous hour of my life was at hand.
>
> In my vision the apparition of these two beings presented an unforgettable picture. Their white robes, their sandaled feet, their wise aspect, their tall figures. . . . There was a light a-glimmer all around them, which in a most uncanny manner lit up the part of the room. Indeed, they looked more than men, bearing the light mien of demi-gods.[2]

Brunton wrote about his experience in the 1930s, seventy years before mine, yet the descriptions are identical. With more time and quiet to work with, Brunton was able to converse with these spirits at will, who inquired of him, "Why dost thou come into this place, seeking to evoke the secret powers? Are not mortal ways enough for thee?" Brunton makes it very clear that the voice was heard inside his head, much like a deaf person might. And he's absolutely correct: anyone who works with subtle forces,

such as clairvoyants, knows the communication is heard within, but different in tone to one's mental thoughts. Let's return to the riveting dialogue that ensued. "They are not!" Paul answered. The priest continued, "The stir of many crowds in the cities comforts the trembling heart of man. Go back, mingle with thy fellows, and thou wilt soon forget the light fancy that brings thee here. . . . The way of Dream will draw thee far from the fold of reason. Some have gone upon it and come back mad. Turn now, whilst there is yet time, and follow the path appointed for mortal feet."

Brunton didn't miss a breath in replying, so sure was he of his chosen path. "I must follow this way. There is none other for me now." One of the priests bent down and uttered in his ear. "He who gains touch with us loses kin with the world. Art thou able to walk alone?"

"I don't know."

"So be it. Thou hast chosen. Abide by thy choice for there is now no recall. Farewell." Brunton was then left alone with the second priest, who said, "The mighty lords of the secret powers have taken thee into their hands. Thou art to be led into the Hall of Learning tonight."

Brunton was instructed to stretch himself in the sarcophagus and was told that in the old days it would've been lined with papyrus reeds. Brunton wrote that his experience was hard to explain—as indeed was mine. He describes being overcome with a sensation like an anesthetic that rendered his muscles taut, like a paralyzing lethargy. After he'd gotten past the shock of what was happening, his consciousness went walkabout on a very personal journey.

Paul was told that he was allowed to experience this crossing into the Otherworld "because thou art a man versed in these things, and has come among us bearing goodwill and understanding in thy heart, some satisfaction thou shalt have."

Still inside the sarcophagus, he was led through unknown passageways inside the Great Pyramid and became disoriented when looking for the door into a chamber holding the secret records, whereupon the priest offered sagely advice, whose relevance is as important now as it was then: "It matters not whether thou discovered the door or not. Find but the secret passage within the mind that will lead thee to the hidden chamber within thine own soul, and thou shalt have found something worthy indeed.

The mystery of the Great Pyramid is the mystery of thine own self. The secret chambers and ancient records are all contained in thine own nature. The lesson of the Pyramid is that man must turn inward, must venture to the unknown centre of his being to find his soul, even as he must venture to the unknown depths of this fane to find its profoundest secret."

The King's Chamber and sarcophagus. The ultimate bridal chamber.

Paul Brunton experienced a small portion of The Way, the very path once taken by initiates from whence they emerged 'risen from the dead.'

For Paul and myself, the experience in Giza was all the more valid because neither of us had gone there seeking an otherworldly encounter for the sake of writing about it later; just walking into a sacred place and allowing yourself to be open to possibility, that's the place where fascinating things occur. It is the thin line between rational and mystical, the abode that painters, musicians, and philosophers seek. It is the production floor of inspiration.

Needless to say the experience altered my perception of the world as well as my understanding of why temples were created, what they can do for you, and *to* you. But it also developed in me the capacity to perceive finer levels of reality, to be more sensitive to the flow of natural energy to the point where I can see it, and—whenever I manage to disregard the distractions of the modern world—improved control of the process of manifestation. Far from being supernatural powers or the product of wishful thinking, these are nascent abilities we all are born with before we "drink of the waters of forgetfulness," to quote the Gnostics. It's the latent potential once promoted by every sect that taught the methods of living resurrection, and more importantly, the sacred places where such experiences took place, and in most cases still do.

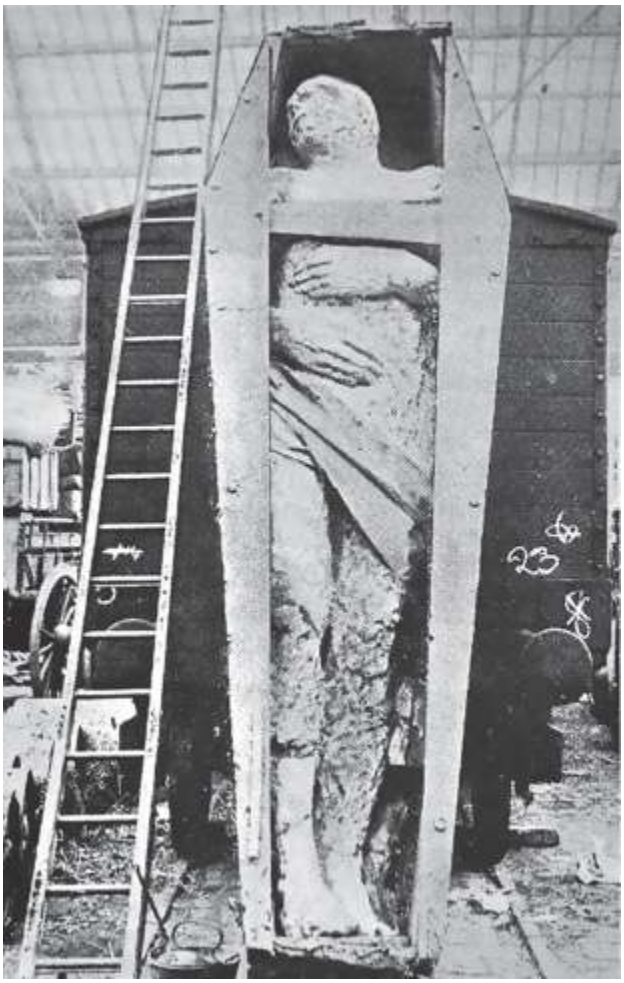
M.I.W: MEN IN WHITE

Curious to learn more about the nature of the tall beings wrapped in white garments about whom radiated an extraordinary light, I turned to the Edfu Building Texts, which describe a prehistoric race of half-human, half-divine beings, the Aku Shemsu Hor (Shining Ones, Followers of Horus), or as they appear in other texts, Watchers. They are credited with bringing the civilizing arts and sciences to Egypt and elsewhere, and ruled predynastic Egypt before Menes, who is described as "the first pharaoh of a purely human bloodline."[3]

They are depicted as five cubits tall—approximately fifteen feet—with elongated but elegant skulls, and wearing long, white garments. The fourth section of the Book of Enoch, titled 'The Book of Dreams,' actually classifies them as "men in white." The Egyptians associated this humanoid race with Sirius, the star equated with ancient wisdom. Their role in spiritual matters is found worldwide. In the Levant, for example, they were classified as shamans, while throughout Native American tribes such as the Hopi and Cherokee they are the Star People, again associated with Sirius. Could these people be the original inspiration behind the wearing of white garments by initiates about to enter the bridal chamber?

What happened to these teachers of the Mysteries, these masters of wisdom? Folk memory throughout Brittany, Ireland, western England, Wales, and Scotland asserts that these exalted beings brought the

knowledge of secret things to the lands of the north, and through their guidance, thousands of temples from Carnac to Callanais were erected. The same story is embedded in the Enochian material, whose older, oral form expresses a folk memory of a crisis in the evolution of this race that occurred around 9000 BC, when a catastrophe of unparalleled proportion is now proven to have consumed much of the Earth.[4] Under such conditions, a race accustomed to different climatic conditions would have found it impossible to survive without interbreeding with a comparatively immature species in order to perpetuate its diminished genetic stock. Would this explain the rise of dynasties of divine kings and queens carrying in their veins traces of a once purely divine bloodline, and with a distinct anatomy to boot? We see traces of this in the skeletons of nine- to twelve-foot tall indigenous people found throughout the world,[5] in the fully fossilized thirteen-foot tall humanoid dug from a giant's grave in County Antrim, Ireland,[6] and in the elongated skulls of the Egyptian pharaohs Amenhotep III, his son Akhenaten, his daughters, and his son Tutankhamun.

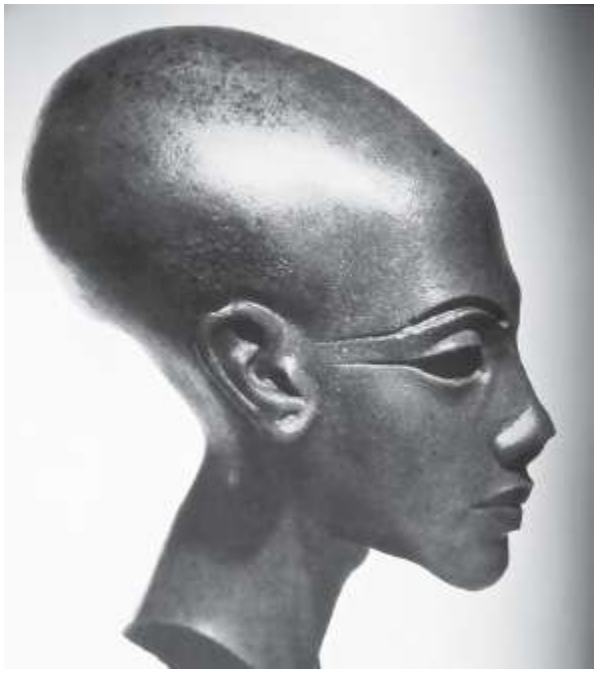


Fossilized giant unearthed from a giant's grave. Ireland.

If these assumptions are correct, the physical mating between two different races to create a semidivine bloodline would have entailed a phallic ritual capable of raising the biology, physiology, psychology, even the DNA of the human woman carefully screened to become the recipient. This sacred marriage would have taken place in a special chamber, a place private and inaccessible to anyone oblivious to the Mysteries.

This speculative scenario may well explain a recurring problem for archaeologists and historians attempting to uphold a linear argument in the ascent of human development: namely, how did an underdeveloped species, barely emerged from the yoke of Neanderthals, suddenly and without precedent construct pyramids, devise fully developed and multilayered symbolic languages, possess complete understanding of the workings of the Earth and its precessional cycle (which alone requires an observational

period of 25,620 years), and generate entire civilizations overnight as though they came prepackaged?



One of Akhenaten's daughters, believed to be Meritaten.

Tolai initiates wearing a hat with a carved snake spiraling around a pole. The white masks depict the spirits observed during resurrection ceremonies. New Britain.

12

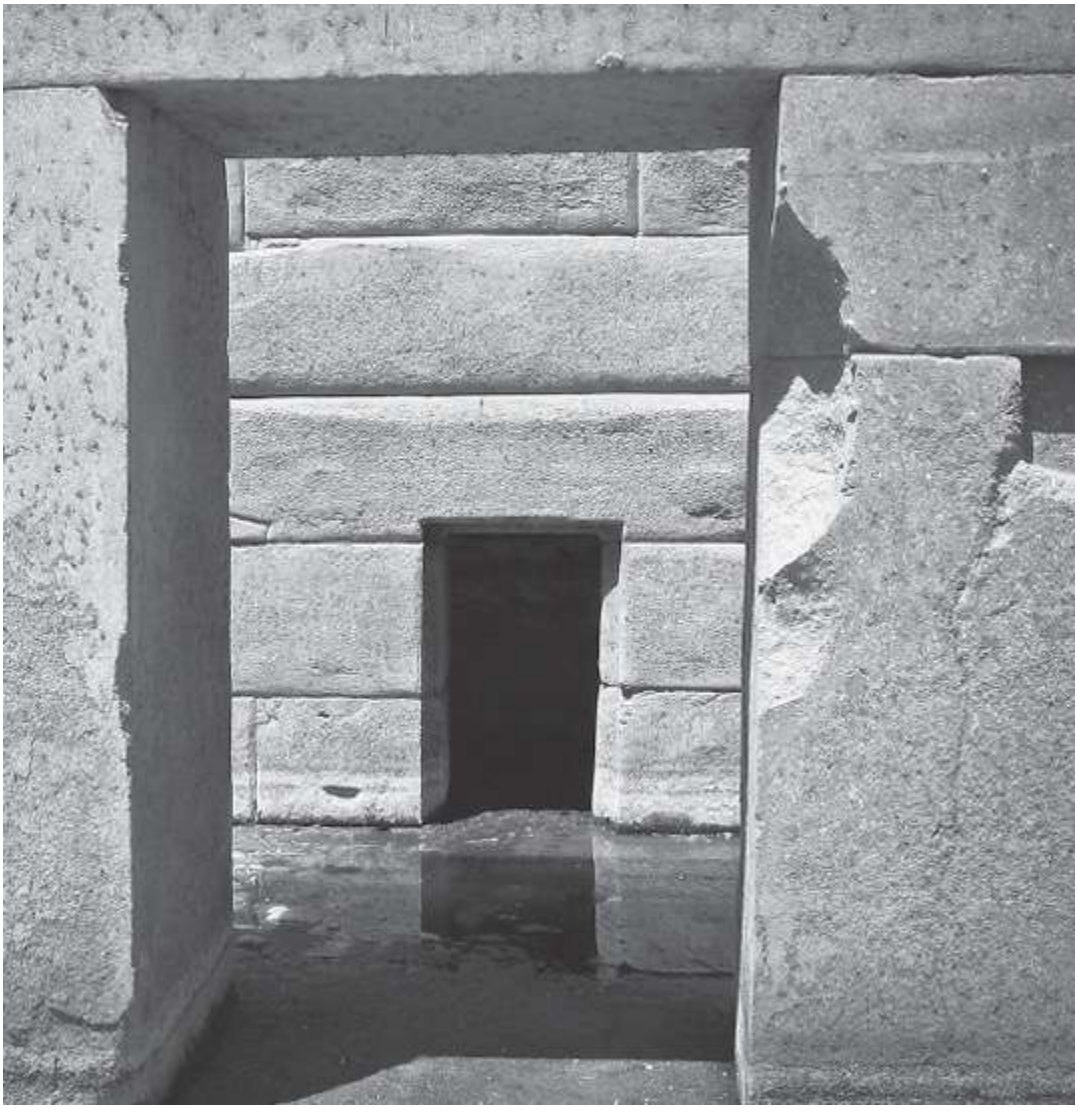
Egyptian Initiation

Writing in the fourth century, the Roman historian Marcellinus remarks on the wealth of secret knowledge stored in the library of Alexandria: "If anyone in the earnestness of his intellect wishes to apply himself to the various branches of divine knowledge, or to the examination of metaphysics, he will find that the whole world owes this kind of learning to Egypt."[1]

The original Egyptian Mysteries were a closely guarded secret, rarely written down and mostly committed to memory by priests of the temple. And yet despite its firm grasp of the laws of the universe, even Egyptian culture slowly but inexorably fell into decline. Following its resurrection by Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic era that ensued witnessed the rebuilding of many temples made derelict by invading Persian hordes, and in exact accordance to their original state. By the time Hellenistic scholars streamed into Alexandria, the knowledge finally began to be committed to parchment or temple wall, translated, and made available to a wider audience, the only fly in the ointment of this noble plan being the wholesale destruction of the material by a mob of Christian fundamentalists.

For centuries the only known surviving source of information on Egyptian Mysteries rites came from Lucius Apuleius, based on his personal initiation experience of the resurrection cult of Osiris, whose focal point—or at least the temple with which it is most synonymous—is the Osirion at Abydos. Lucius writes how he underwent a period of observation within the inner temple community, leading to a kind of monastic experience within the priesthood. Preparations began with the purging of base emotions of the

physical body or lower vibrations; asceticism was essential throughout the teachings, while a ten-day fast prepared the body for the final stage. At sunset on the tenth day, the priest took the candidates by the hand and led them “to the most secret and most sacred place of the inner temple.” From this point Lucius kept his vow of silence and wrote about what he saw no more. However, he offers a hint: “I at length returned, borne along through all the elements. I beheld the sun shining in the dead of night; I saw both the infernal and celestial gods. I approached and adored them.”[2]



The Osirion at Abydos, focal point of the resurrection cult of Osiris.

Some late Egyptian texts add further details: how the priest or initiate would enter a special place in the temple and immerse themselves in *qed,* a state of meditation that paved the way for individual access into the Otherworld. The priests expected every individual to return albeit sometimes stunned by what they'd seen, describing it as "a voluntary death and a difficult recovery of health."[3]

THE BOOK OF THE NOT-SO-DEAD

The greatest obstacle to understanding the true nature of Egyptian resurrection texts lies with interpretations by Victorian historians who treated the material within a Judeo-Christian framework, in other words, as literal funerary rites and not as they were intended to be read, as allegories. With few notable exceptions,[4] intellectuals of the period were in total denial that primitive Egyptians could have possibly understood a mystical science superseding that of evolved Europeans, much less described experiences taking place in a dimension beyond ours. This literal funerary interpretation clouded, distorted, and de-potentized the true understanding of Egyptian mystical sensitivity, and yet their works clearly show they underwent significant spiritual transformations, and did so while still alive. Shamanism, after all, needs to be directly experienced rather than philosophically rationalized. It is a participation in the interdimensional plane beyond the conscious senses. Classic Greek and Roman philosophers claimed as much, and two thousand years ago they were far closer to the truth than we are today.

Chaeremon, a first-century Egyptian priest who went to great pains to make abstract Egyptian concepts fathomable to non-Egyptians, gave an insight into the depth of knowledge possessed by the old priesthood who, through "constant contact with divine knowledge and inspiration" pursued a "life of wisdom. . . . The priests dedicated their entire lives to the thought and contemplation of God. . . . The fruit of their contemplation was knowledge, and through contemplation and knowledge they attained a way of life at once esoteric and old-fashioned."[5] Judging by their titles—Master of Secrets of Heaven, Earth, and the Amdwat, and even more explicitly, Master of Secrets Concerning the Unique Seeing-Vision—high officials in the temple certainly gained direct and profound understanding of spiritual

realities. One such vizier was Rekhmire, a man cognizant of the mechanics of the resurrection initiation, of whom it was claimed, “There is nothing on earth, in heaven, or in any part of the Amdwat in which he does not have knowledge.”[6]

For the Egyptians, the Amdwat—the Otherworld—is an integral component of birth, death, and rebirth; it is the source of energy and an astral reference library. And because it was seen as the source of matter, the incarnate human being was not considered truly alive but quite the opposite, whereas the soul is perpetually alive and lives in the eternal. Initiates even had this credo carved in their tombs when they finally, physically died: “A lifetime in this world is merely a trifle, and eternity lies in the realm of the dead.”[7]

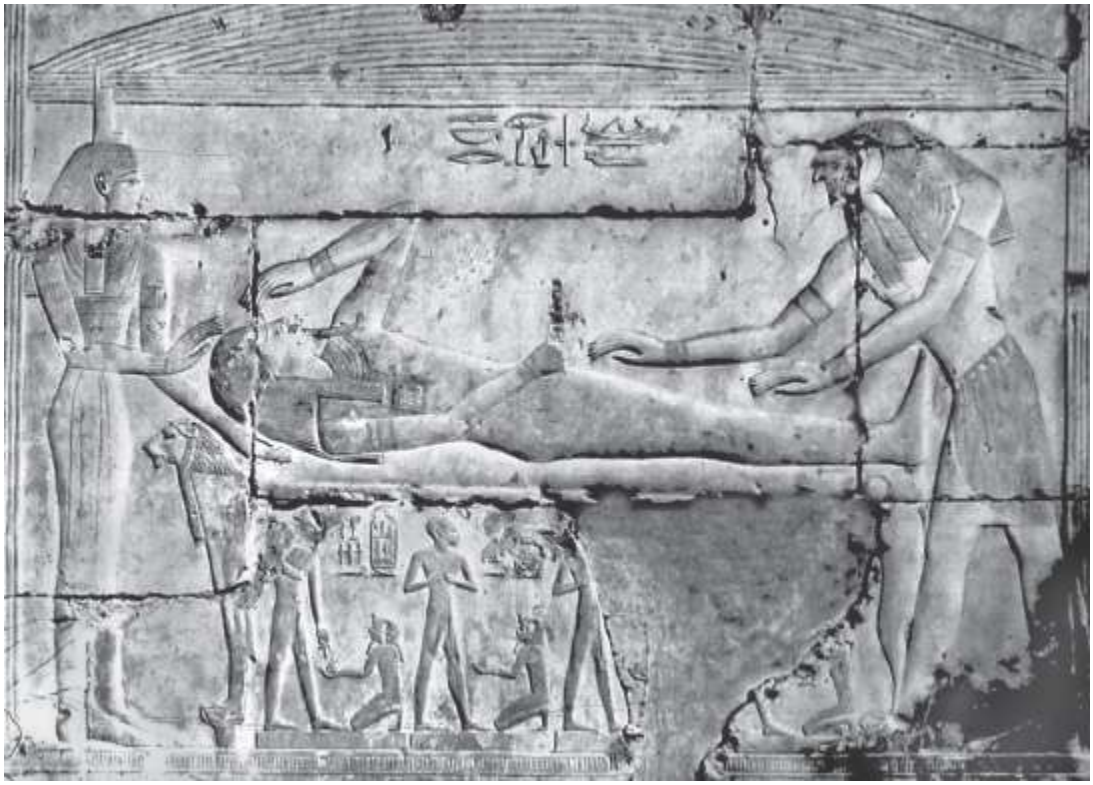
According to Egyptian belief the purpose of the Amdwat is to awaken “the inner great human” by reuniting the soul with its dormant purpose during its entrapment in a physical body. The same understanding of the workings of the soul is indoctrinated in a Chinese Taoist work, *The Secret of the Golden Flower,* which asserts that contact with multiple sacred places “awakens the Great Man within.”

If independent academic thinkers had not gone out of their way to question the literal interpretation of Egyptian mysticism[8] we today would be none the wiser regarding one of its greatest secrets—that the resurrection practices of the Egyptians were not meant specifically for the dead. The Book of What Lies in the Amdwat, written on the walls of the tomb of Rameses IV (ca. 1155 BC), offers a lucid description of the nighttime journey of the soul from material to ethereal and back, proof that someone reached this land of paradise and returned to tell about it. Moreover, it recommends, “It is good for the dead to have this knowledge, but also for the person on Earth.” The text concludes with a startling promise: “Whoever understands these mysterious images is a well-provided light being. Always this person can enter and leave the netherworld. Always speaking to the living ones. Proven to be true a million times.”[9]

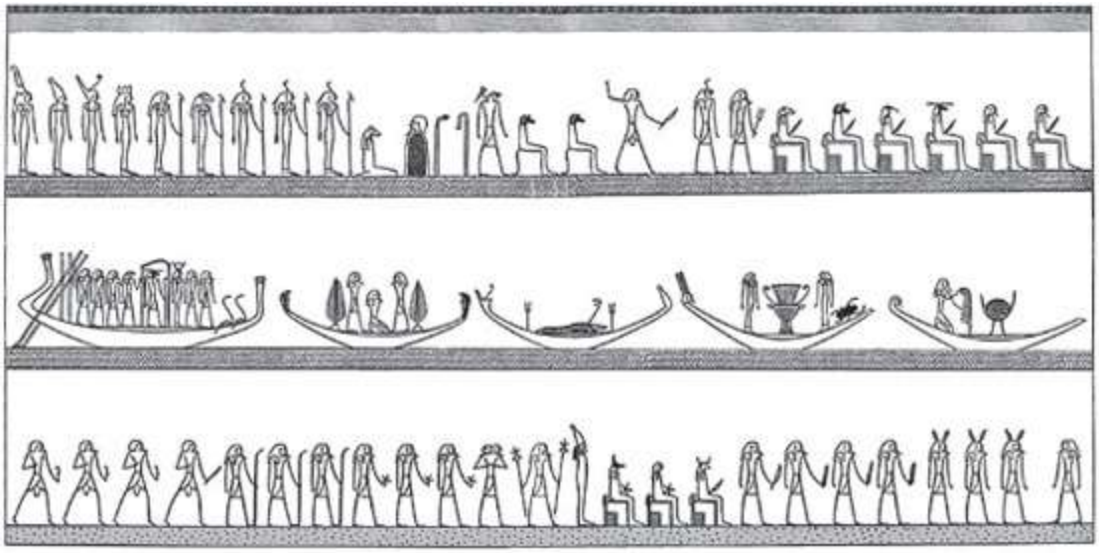
At its core lies a symbolic representation of the transformation and renewal of the individual following a figurative but not literal death. It describes the regenerative qualities of the night world, where answers to basic human questions are provided. In symbolic terms, if a person is able to plot the same course as the sun god on his journey through the

Otherworld, he or she will learn about the forces that shape the causal world, thus gaining insights into the cycle of life and its eternal renewal.

From 1470 BC, the original text, Treatise of the Hidden Chamber, appears along the passages and chambers of Thutmosis III's anomalous tomb, describing in vivid detail mystical experiences by the living that parallel those a person undergoes at death.[10] The tomb is anomalous because the king's mummy was not found inside but on the other side of the mountain at Deir-el-Bahri—ironically in the same tomb as Seqnenre Taa, the pharaoh to whom the ritual of resurrection within Freemasonry is traced.[11] Also, the text's graphic style is in sharp contrast to others in the Valley of the Kings; the chamber containing the red quartzite sarcophagus is oriented northeast, the traditional alignment synonymous with the acquisition of ancient wisdom; and there is a well inside a tomb supposedly meant to offer drinking water to a dead person. We are therefore open to entertain the likelihood that the *original* function of this chamber was for temporary rather than permanent interment.



The pharaoh lying on his bier, presided by Isis and Seker. With his arm raised he is clearly alive and pointing to his brow, the symbolic seat of the all-seeing eye. Abydos.



A section of the text in Thutmosis III's tomb.

The name Thutmosis means 'Djehuti is born.' Djehuti, the god of wisdom, is one of two figures that feature prominently in the resurrection texts, and of whom was said he "knew the secrets of the night" and could initiate them to the living by the use of correct techniques so they might visit the Amdwat and return.[12] His doctrines describe how "the human being can become established on high without ever leaving the earth."[13]

It is well worth making a further point about Djehuti, whose name was later transliterated by the Greeks as Thoth. He wasn't perceived by early Egyptians merely as a god in spirit form but as a real man who attained divine status through revelations gained from his interaction with a divine source, receiving his immortal status through self-purification, yet choosing to remain among the people to reveal to them the knowledge he gained by accessing the Otherworld.[14] Even in his later incarnation as Hermes Trismegistus in the eighteenth century he was still believed among philosophical circles to have been a real person.

Djehuti was associated with the number 8, representing as it does the four material elements balanced with the four mutables. He is a balanced being, the one who's harmonized the male with the female, the physical with the spiritual, and become a "single one," to quote Jesus; his physical abode and temple was the town of Khmun, literally Eight Town. Since Djehuti is the one who professes advice on living resurrection, it is worth pointing out a fascinating parallel with Jesus the god-man. In the art of

gematria—a cypher assigning numerical values to letters and words—as Thoth, his name carries a value of 88, just as Jesus is 888.[15]

The other figure who comes to preside over the entrance into the Amdwat is Osiris, and in a chapel dedicated exclusively to him in the temple of Abydos there are texts describing how the soul ascends to the sky to become an *akh,* a being of light; such instructions were given the title *transfigurations*. The candidate—in this case the pharaoh Seti I—is shown being led by Osiris to emerge at the end of the ceremony with his body spiritualized in the form of Horus.

Adjacent to this above-ground temple is one of the most formidable underground chambers ever built, the Osirion, a temple made from cyclopean rectangular blocks of red granite and, judging from the buildup of mud outside its walls, believed to be at least 12,000 years old. The name speaks for itself, it is the House of Osiris, the place where the god-man was slain by Set to remanifest as the falcon-god Seker, leaving little doubt that the mystery play of the birth and rebirth of this god-man were taught and conducted here. Its central atrium even features a pool with stairs at either end and was most likely used for ritual baptism.

But yet again there are no signs of burial. Seti I's mummy and tomb were found deep below the Valley of the Kings, precisely 52 miles away, a number practically identical to the slope angle of that other House of Osiris, the Great Pyramid.

Virtually equidistant and following the same compass direction lies another chapel dedicated to Osiris, this time at Edfu, where a doorway leads to a passage within the hollow wall and down into two underground chambers adorned with hieroglyphs of an instructional nature.

Preparations in these temples for an initiate's journey into the Otherworld were complex and lengthy affairs, suggesting the practitioners were well aware of the dangers inherent in out-of-body excursions. In the temple of Dendera, a secret door on the floor leads down into a hole only a contortionist can appreciate. Following the awkward entry, two claustrophobic passageways each lead to respective narrow chambers officially described as storage rooms for religious objects, so why their walls should be covered with unusual and elaborate ritual scenes is illogical to say the least. However, the rooms are suited to a person undergoing incubation, with the presiding murals depicting one-of-a-kind reliefs of

what appears to be a rebirthing ceremony featuring lotus buds—the plant consistently associated with spiritual enlightenment—filled with serpents and made to resemble what can only be described as huge incandescent light bulbs. The scene is highly suggestive of a regeneration ritual in its most symbolic form.

When the candidates reemerged at dawn they did so as adepts, risen from the dead in time to greet Sirius, and looking at the world through very different eyes. As always, what initiates had seen was not shared; they remained close-lipped concerning the information received, and lest they forgot, a kind injunction carved on a wall at Edfu was there to remind them: "Do not reveal what you have seen in the Mysteries of the temple."

Mural inside the hidden chamber at Dendera.

Murals from Luxor and Dendera. Left: Pharaoh in a state of motion presided by Isis, and her sister Nephtys, Lady of the Temple Enclosure, a priestess who oversaw private rituals. Right: The living pharaoh rises as Osiris. Bottom: Pharaoh animated on his bier, his spirit floats as a bird while an attendant stands by with a libation. Why would a dead person require a refreshment? In each case Pharaoh is depicted in a manner inconsistent with a dead person.

OSIRIS IN THE EAST

The living resurrection traditions of the Egyptians are mirrored in India and the East. "God dwells within everyone, but few know how to find him. And this is The Way to salvation," says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu narrative dialogue between this creator god and prince Arjuna. In the same breath, Krishna advises on a great secret of the pure Mystery: "In order to reach perfection it is necessary to acquire knowledge of oneness, which is above wisdom." With these words of counsel Krishna lets the cat out of the bag and reveals he's an initiate familiar with the Mysteries of the Otherworld. But there's more to the story than meets the eye. For one thing the Gita is a morality play in the best Gnostic tradition: Krishna is the prince's charioteer, so the implication is that Arjuna belongs to that selective group of spiritual seekers who follow The Way of the Chariot.

Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain cultures are not short on exquisite temples and hidden chambers where one can pursue The Way. They also developed physical yogic techniques to help candidates raise their corporeal energy or *shakti* so as to enter a state of bliss and penetrate the Otherworld in a self-

controlled manner. The ancient *rishi* and *yogi* of India discovered that by controlling and revolving energy continuously up and down the spine to the brain it is possible to accelerate one's state of awareness.

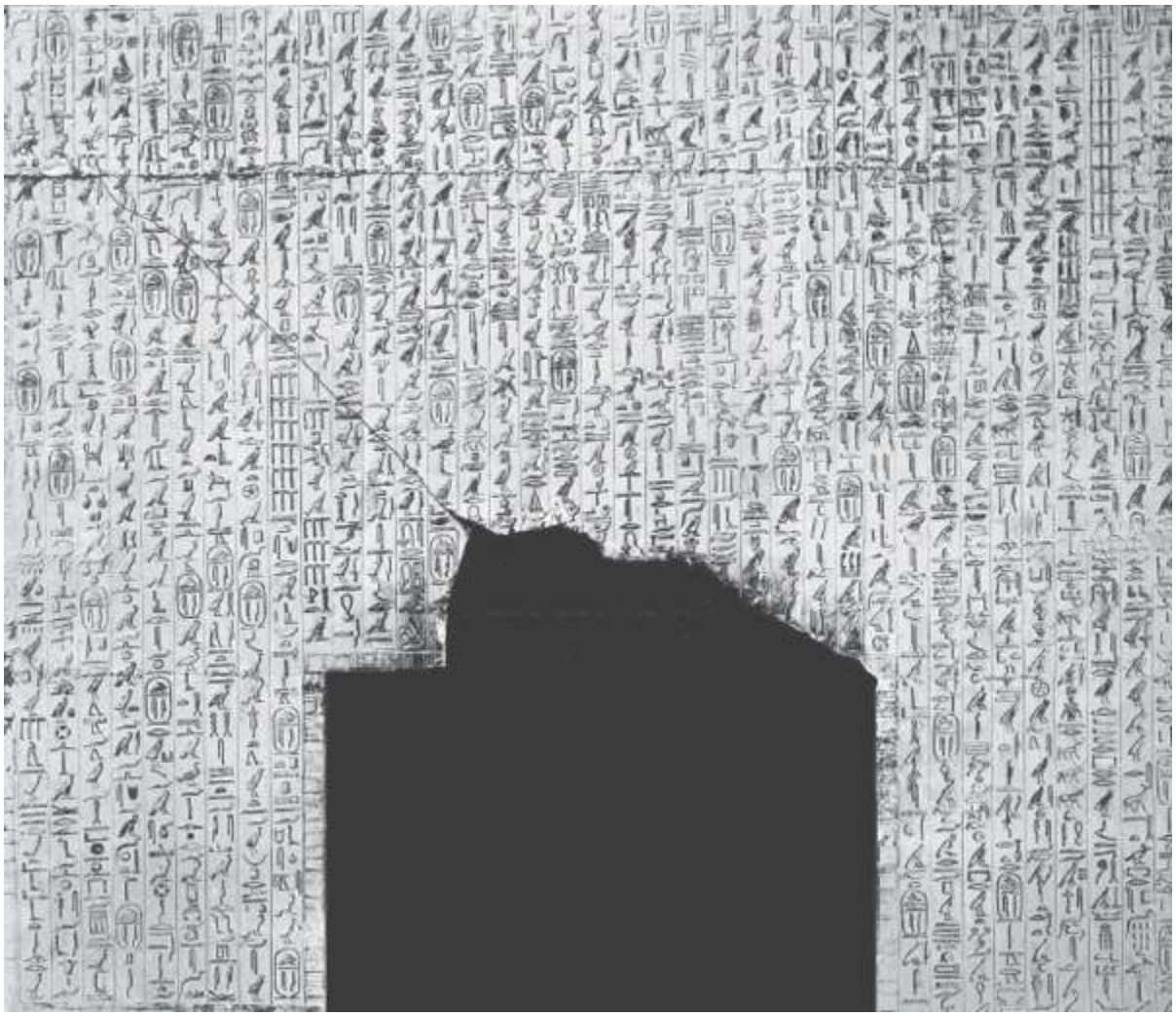
One such method is *kriya,* whose origin belongs to the remote past. Krishna extols its virtues in the Bhagavad Gita, the sage Patanjali speaks of it in the Yoga Sutras. It then goes underground for centuries until it is reintroduced in the nineteenth century and, as with so many other sacred practices, it was available only to a faithful few following a period of preparation lasting one year, and then only to those who led an ascetic life.

Like The Way, the advanced techniques of kriya yoga's sacred science are said to liberate the soul from the physical world toward a realization of the Source, the difference being that in using your own body you become the bridal chamber, you become your own private, sacred cave. Much of this philosophy came under the umbrella of *kundalini* (derived from Maha Kundali, literally Mother of Space and Time), with the aim of achieving a holotropic transformation of consciousness.

Under correct conditions, raising the body's innate electrical energy goes hand in hand with supernatural power and spiritual grace, and it is these qualities that alter the ordinary person into an extraordinary magician, in the original sense of the word—a magus, one who learns to harness the laws of nature.

This spiritual technology exists within the framework of the Gospel of John so cherished by the Mandeans, just as it is displayed all over the temple walls of Egypt. Initiatory environments such as Abydos depict mural after mural of implements being attached along the pharaoh's spine and third eye, physically and symbolically, with noticeable differences in the posture of the king, who when standing is depicted as moving, and when lying flat like a corpse is animated with his arm and leg raised, demonstrating the pharaoh is not dead but taking instruction while living. He is being prepared for a journey and is expected to return.

And the description of that journey is found in the most complete ancient work, the Pyramid Texts.



The Pyramid Texts. Saqqara.

13

How to Travel to the Otherworld and Back. Or, the Pyramid Texts

Nine pyramids transfix the sky at Saqqara, a sprawling ceremonial temple complex named for Seker, the falcon god of rebirth.

The name arises from *sy-k-ri* (hurry to me),[1] the cry made by Isis to Osiris as he wanders through the darkness toward the Otherworld, seeking to unite with his bride and become one again—an action uncannily similar to the Celtic goddess Brigit's *keening* cry.

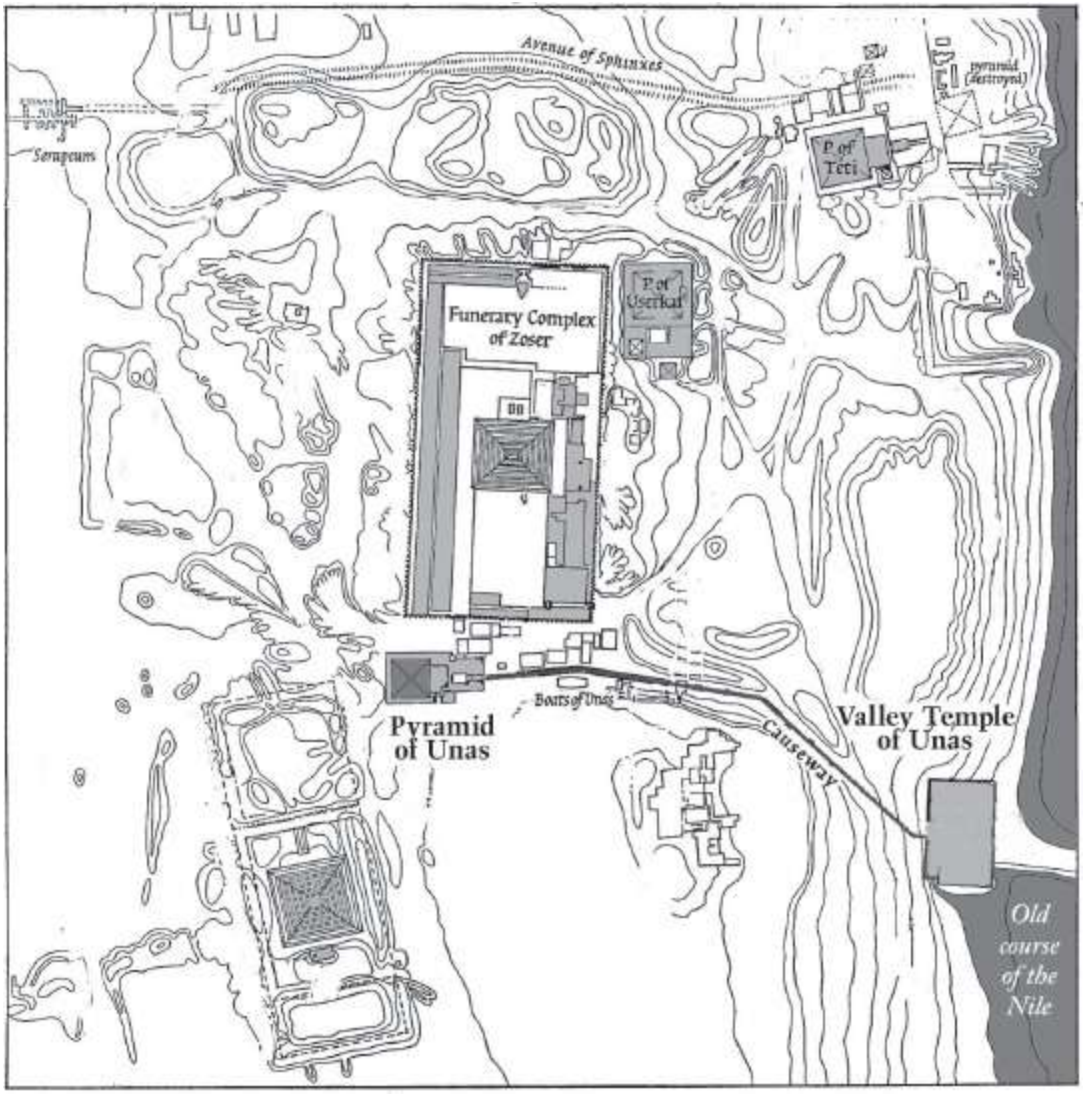
These factors alone identify Saqqara as a place where one comes to experience resurrection, and indeed it is in Saqqara where one finds the earliest surviving works of sacred literature offering a unique window into a ritual experience connecting a living person with the Otherworld.

The Pyramid Texts contain the most vivid and detailed instructions of the Amdwat, its halls and partitions, how to get there, how to overcome negative forces at the onset, what to expect to encounter at each hour, and the correct use of spells and incantations essential for the soul to maintain focus throughout the entire pilgrimage. They are a written prototype of the Mysteries teachings, and quite possibly the first time such a ritual was transmitted visually rather than orally. Their influence resonates throughout all Mysteries schools. But above all, the Pyramid Texts clearly imply they were intended as a ritual where the initiate was expected to return to the living body.

Seker. As protector of special chambers, part of his duty was to oversee the satisfactory transit into the Otherworld.

From floor to ceiling the texts cover the innermost subterranean chambers of the circa 2350 BC pyramid of Unas, raising the odds of this being the earliest version, and quite likely the one copied onto the walls of Thutmosis III's own chamber almost a thousand years later. And like Thutmosis's, this necropolis contains a sarcophagus but no evidence that Unas was ever buried here.

The pyramid of Unas was originally accessed by boat. The candidate was ferried from the east bank of the Nile and disembarked in the west into a small valley temple, then proceeded down a long, covered causeway leading into the subterranean temple, all of which was encompassed within a boundary wall containing the pyramid proper. Thus from the moment the candidates set foot on dry land, they were sealed off from the sunlight of the outer world to focus solely on their westward peregrination, following the path of the setting sun into the Otherworld.

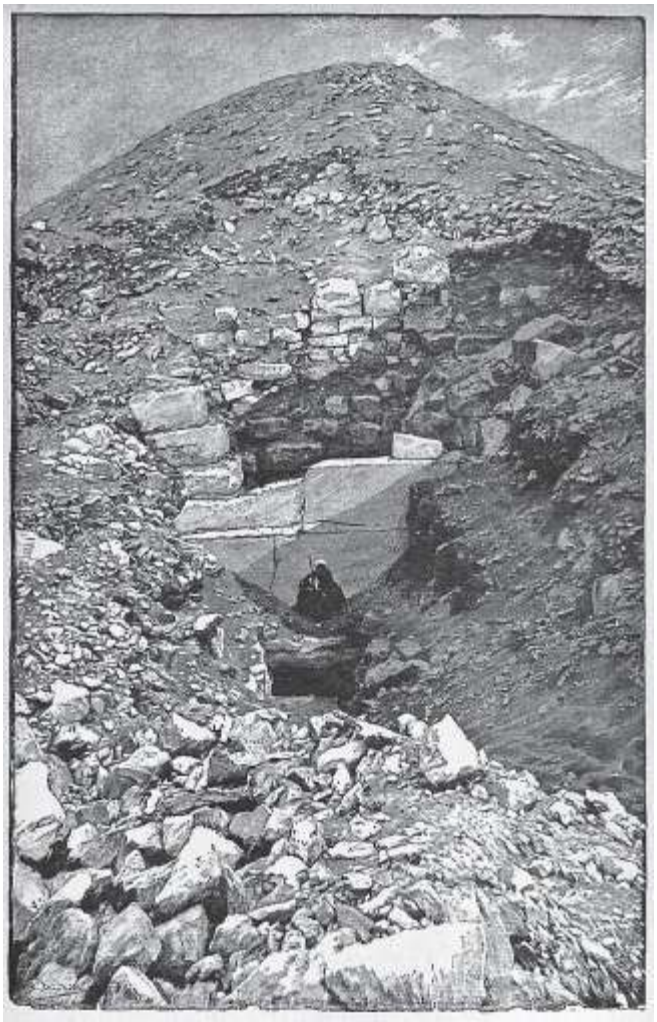


Part of the Saqqara complex with the pyramid of Unas and its valley temple.

The odd thing when entering this pyramid today is that the first texts one encounters must be read from right to left, demonstrating that what is today taken to be the entrance into the main chamber is in fact the exit. Originally, the initiate would have entered below ground, resided in the womb, and reappeared resurrected at the summit of a man-made hill.

Because everything in the world of temple design was done according to the Law of Correspondence, even Unas's massive black granite sarcophagus lies purposefully in the western section of the complex. Granite was the material of choice for sarcophagi in pyramids for a number or reasons. It's an igneous rock emanating from deep within the Earth in a

molten state, so it effortlessly mimics the soul's immersion in the void, changing from a liquid state to solid form as it reenters the physical body following a transfiguration. It's not by accident that the Egyptian word for granite, *match,* has its phonetic derivative in *mat* (to imagine, discover, conceive).[2] In the case of Unas's sarcophagus, the choice of black carries a further significance in that it was the color associated with the darkness of the primeval void where all knowledge resides, and through contact with this knowledge one comes to be spiritually resurrected.[3] This gnostic concept is the reasoning behind statues of a Black Virgin discovered in grottoes throughout Europe.



The Pyramid of Unas in the nineteenth century, Saqqara.

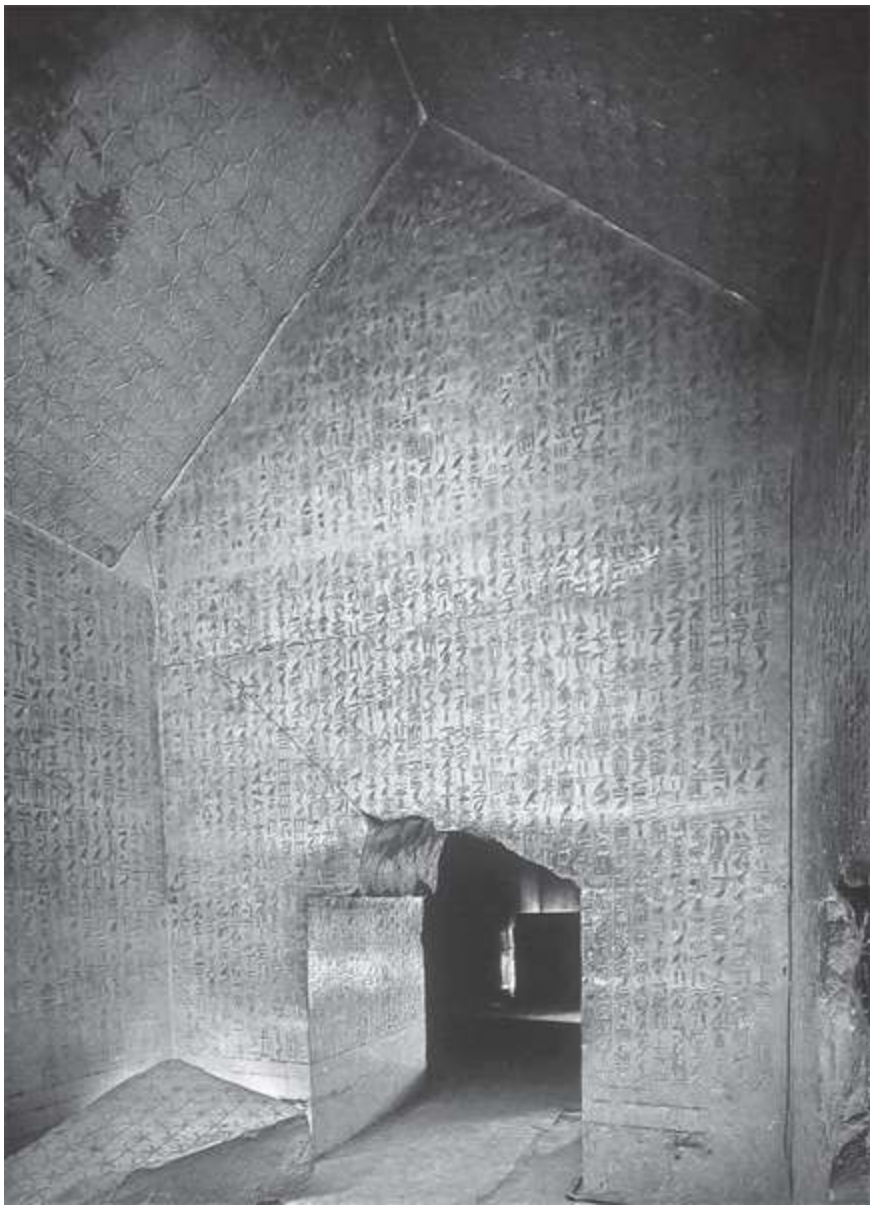
Far from being mere funerary beliefs, the Pyramid Texts encircling the sarcophagus represent a series of mystical experiences by the pharaoh—the mediator between material and ethereal worlds—akin to those described in shamanism, such as the ascent of the soul, encounters with gods, and the spiritual rebirth of the individual. The unusual theme that defines the Pyramid Texts as an instruction meant for a living person undergoing a figurative rather than a literal death is neatly encompassed in Utterance 213, the text closest to the sarcophagus: "O Unas, you have not departed dead, you have departed alive to sit upon the throne of Osiris, your *aba* scepter in your hand that you may give orders to the living, your lotus-bud scepter in your hand that you may give orders to those whose seats are hidden." The message is very clear: the pharaoh has ascended into the Amdwat very much alive, and by following in the footsteps of Osiris he is now capable of communicating with the living and the discarnate alike. Like Jacob in his shamanic dream, the pharaoh is assisted in his upward journey by means of a ladder, in his case the Djed pillar, symbol of the very backbone of the universe.

Isis, Pharaoh, and Djed pillar.

A second clue that the Pyramid Texts were used specifically as a tool for the living lies in the pharaoh adopting the form of Horus. He repeatedly describes himself as "Horus, my father's heir. I am one who went and came back," and it is as Horus that he "rests in life in the West [the Amdwat] . . . and shines anew in the East."[4] This is a radical departure from the standard funerary utterance accompanying a dead pharaoh, who typically departs for the Otherworld as Osiris and stays there. It is his *successor* who adopts the form of the risen Horus, the son of Osiris who, in human form, represents the human spirit reborn.[5]

To emphasize the point, in the south wall of the sarcophagus chamber there is a description of a mystical experience in which the spirit of Unas, while imitating the path taken by the god of resurrection, himself undergoes a spiritual purification and rebirth to the repeated chorus of "Unas is not dead, Unas is not dead, Unas is not dead," proceeded by the return of his spirit back into his living body.[6] No other utterance from the Pyramid Texts so encapsulates the central theme common to all Mysteries traditions: that the soul is capable of temporarily disengaging from the living, physical body, journeying independently into the spirit world, and returning. It forms the central tenet of gnosticism. It is an experience designed for the living, and not to be left undiscovered until the moment one exhales his last breath on Earth.

Unas's empty sarcophagus surrounded by the Pyramid Texts.



Unas's chamber covered with the Pyramid Texts.

The point of the Pyramid Texts was for the soul of the living to be exposed to the Otherworld, to be met by Isis in her celestial role as Sophis —the representation of wisdom and the divine feminine—and return to the body with knowledge of celestial mechanics, apply them on a practical level, and allow the divine to flow through the conscious self while performing earthly duties.

Pharaohs who received initiation are identified by the effigies of the serpent and vulture placed above the brow, the seat of the third eye. The

raised serpent's position near the pineal gland represents the spiritualized pharaoh, one who has learned the secrets of inner journeying. It also demonstrates he has learned to harness the Earth's telluric forces (represented by the snake), through which he is capable of rising above the urges of the flesh (represented by the vulture)—the transcended aspect of the material-seeking human, the physical urge held in check and spiritualized. In many ways it is a similar concept to the red ochre circle practicing Hindus paint on their brows.

The uraeus on Pharaoh's brow.

Ka door.

At Saqqara there is another recurring theme associated with the secret Mysteries, that of members of the pharaoh Teti I's household being favored to join such a privileged inner circle. There exists an inscription on a *ka* door (a false door through which the soul flows) describing the surprise by one such individual upon being admitted to "master secret things of the king." Teti built his pyramid beside that of Unas, and it contains part of the latter's Pyramid Texts. The humbled servant continues, "Today in the presence of the son of Ra, Teti . . . more honoured by the king than any servant, as master of secret things of every work which his majesty should be done. . . . When his majesty favoured me, his majesty caused that I enter the chamber of restricted access."[7]

At the end of his ritual experience, this grateful individual proclaims joyfully, "I found The Way."

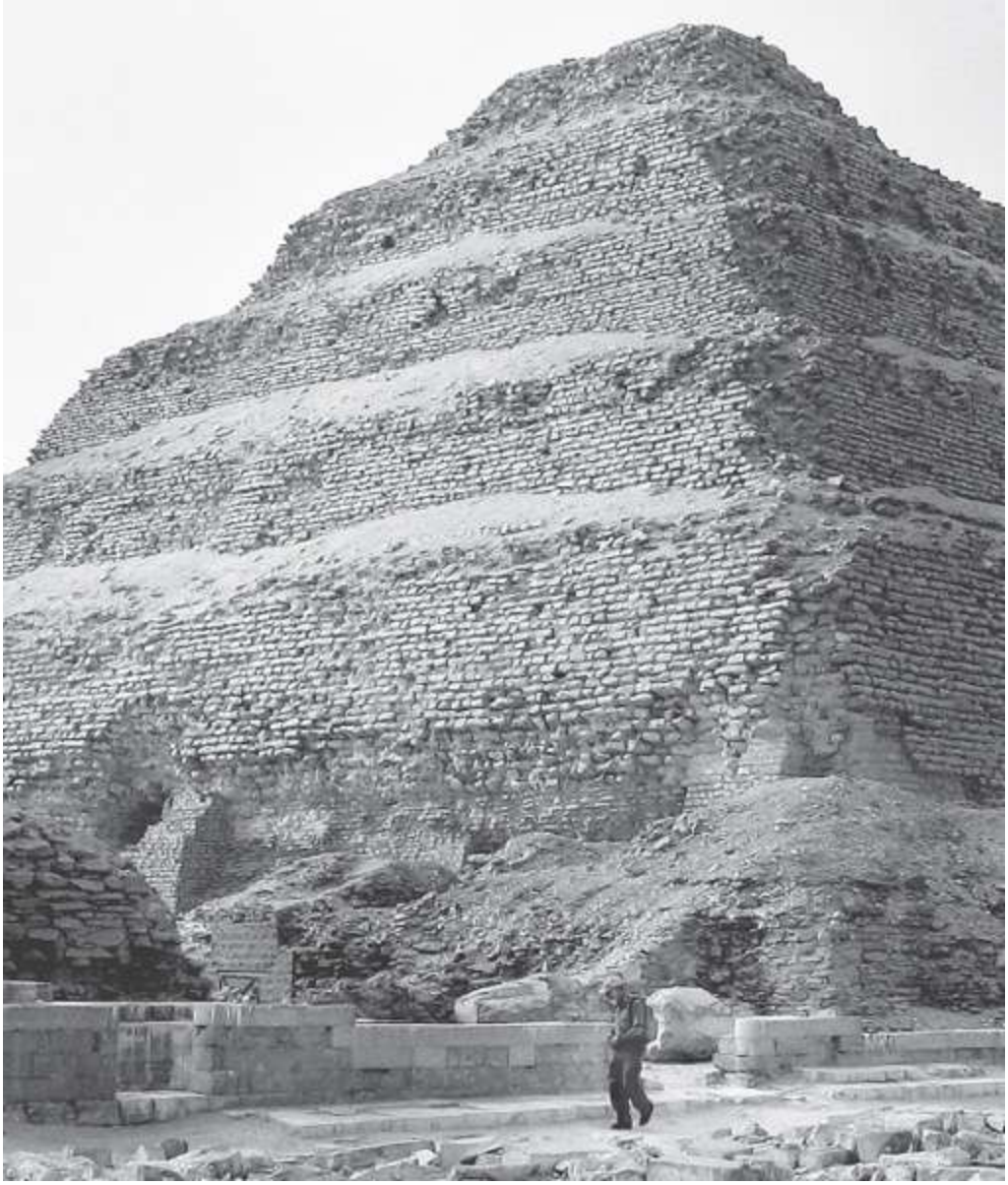
14

Pharaoh Has Left the Building

When the stepped pyramid of Sekhemkhet was excavated, its entrance and internal rooms were still sealed. Inside the innermost chamber stood an alabaster sarcophagus of the most delicate workmanship. It too was found sealed, and when opened it was discovered to contain nothing but air. No burial. Only strands of blue water lily lay on top of the sarcophagus; the same situation occurred at the pyramid of Zawiyet el-Aryan.

Two Old Kingdom pyramids, unburglarized, complete with sealed sarcophagi but no body inside—clear evidence that not all funerary buildings were intended as final resting places but served some other, possibly symbolic or ritual purpose.

Sekhemkhet's pyramid lies adjacent to that of Unas at Saqqara, and both fall under the gaze of the imposing stepped pyramid of Djoser, undoubtedly the best-preserved structure of all, whose extensive courtyard was once the scene of a five-day Sed festival, typically performed during the pharaoh's thirteenth year of reign and immediately following the annual rites of Osiris. The festival provides another clue strengthening the theory that the Saqqara complex, together with its Pyramid Texts, was once intimately associated with the ritual of living resurrection.



Stepped pyramid of Djoser. Saqqara.

During the festival the pharaoh underwent a twofold rite of passage. In the first and public part, his kingship was renewed, offerings were made, gods were visited in their shrines, and purification rites were administered, followed by a coronation ritual whereupon the pharaoh ingested a specially prepared meal.

The second part is altogether different in character. It was conducted hidden from view and involved the administering of secret rites to ensure the pharaoh's rebirth. He entered a special room carrying the standard of

Wepwawet—the jackal god whose title, Opener of the Ways, is highly suggestive of his function. He was joined by a *sem* priest who conducted funerary rites. Two other priests also entered the chamber: one was the Opener of the Mouth, while the other carried a white vest to be worn by the pharaoh to symbolize the union of Horus and Osiris.[1]

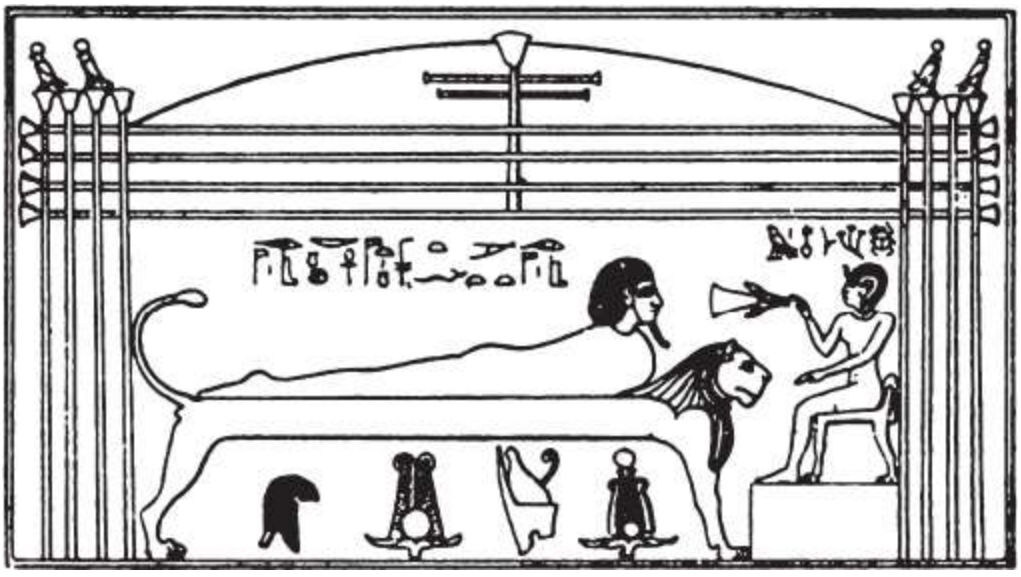
Seker holds the rod of the jackal; Seshat, goddess of sacred buildings, stands by.

All this preparation for the pharaoh's embarkation into the afterlife is very odd considering he is in perfect health and at the height of his power.

Another rite follows, this time inside the ‘tomb,’ for which a special sarcophagus was commissioned.[2] Painted reliefs in the chamber clearly show the pharaoh not lying down dead but upright and engaging with the gods in jovial form. It would seem that the pharaoh—who is described as “resting in the shrine”—is undergoing a preparation to immerse himself temporarily in the Otherworld to be spiritually renewed, for indeed he does return to his living body to resume his earthly duties until the day he physically dies.

An elaborately carved sarcophagus was likewise specially commissioned for the Sed festival of Mentuhotep IV, a pharaoh who continued living well beyond the event, making the sarcophagus redundant as a burial implement.

Reliefs of the Sed festival of Pharaoh Niuserre depict him drinking a libation and lying on a bed inside a bridal chamber. The same scene appears repeatedly in Dendera and Abydos—two temples intimately associated with the resurrection myth of Osiris—where the pharaoh is shown lying on a bed in a very animated state, his arm raised, sometimes lying on his stomach, but unmistakably alive.



Pharaoh lying on his stomach and given the hallucinogenic blue water lily.

The ritual white garment worn by the pharaoh in the Sed festival would survive two thousand years to reappear as the white tunic worn by

the Essenes, and by those wishing to be indoctrinated into the secret Mysteries by Jesus. As with so many parables, the candidates around Jesus's life tend to arrive in the night to be initiated—like the influential Pharisee, Nicodemus, who goes to see Jesus for rebirthing. Obviously people who are alive and well don't go seeking rebirth, so the tales need to be interpreted with a metaphorical eye. For example, in the biblical parable of the king who invites guests to a wedding feast, of all the people gathered in the marriage chamber, one individual is not wearing his wedding garment—the white baptismal robe—and without it his presence in the chamber is deemed invalid.[3]

As we have already seen, the weight of evidence suggests Saqqara and a goodly number of its surrounding pyramids were originally designed with a sacred ritual in mind. For one thing, the layout of Sekhemkhet's own pyramid complex is virtually identical to that of Djoser's, and like Sekhemkhet, Djoser's body was not buried in his own pyramid.

Likewise, ten pyramids from Seila to Dashur to Giza, all attributed to Sneferu, contained no sarcophagi or mummies, and in any case, why should a pharaoh possessing one body require ten separate funeral parlors?

A close look at the two pyramids at Dashur provides some answers. The Bent Pyramid's adjacent valley temple contains frescoes depicting Sneferu performing his Sed festival.[4] As does the nearby Red Pyramid; an inscription on the casing stones along the base commemorates the date of Sneferu's thirteenth year in power, the mandatory time for a pharaoh to enact the Sed festival, while the stelae in the adjoining temple depict him wearing his ritual garb.[5]

If we take these observations and apply them to the three main pyramids farther north at Giza, similarities emerge. Each one features a lengthy causeway leading to a preparatory temple, and inner chambers containing an empty sarcophagus. In the preparatory temple of Khufu—Smenkhare's son—there was found a small relief also depicting the pharaoh wearing clothing used specifically during the Sed festival.[6]

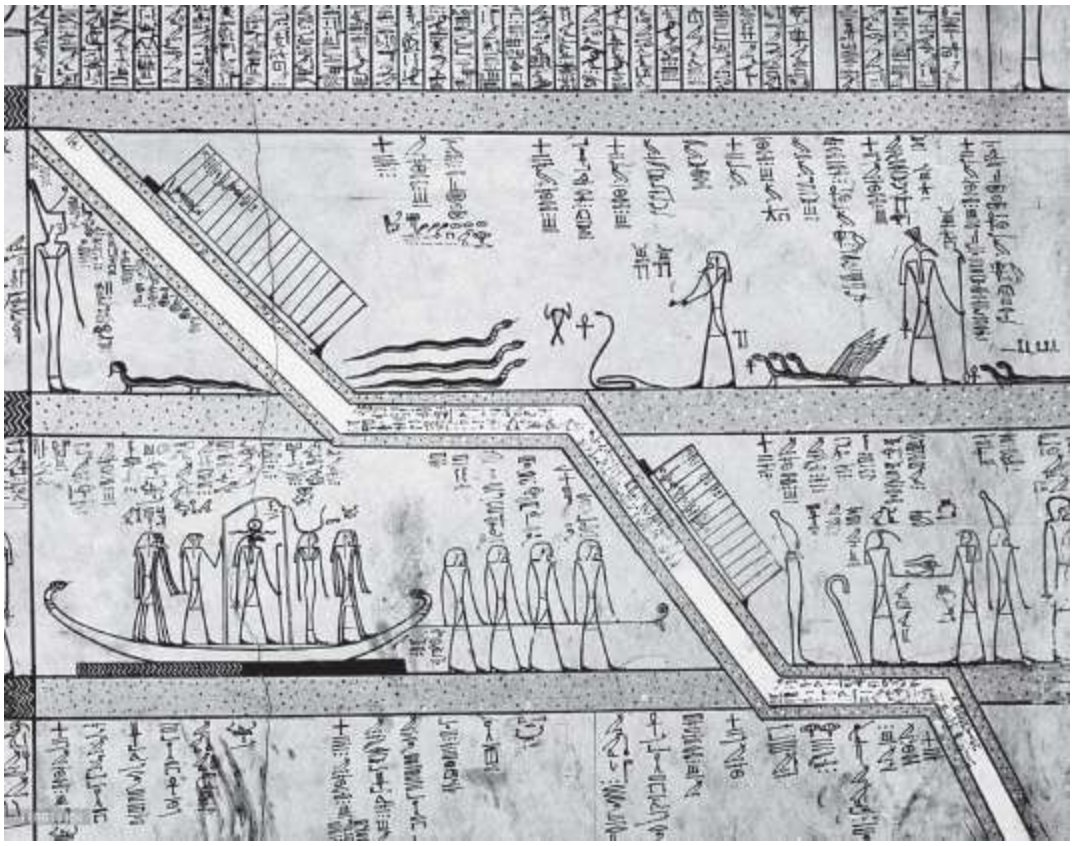
The fifth-century-BC Greek historian Herodotus remarked in his *Histories* that the pharaohs Cheops and Chephren (Khufu and Khafre in Egyptian) "were not buried in the pyramids that bear their names, but were rather buried elsewhere on the Giza plateau, in their vicinity." So, could the

Great Pyramid have been originally conceived with the ritual of living resurrection in mind?

Let's begin with the basic assertion that this extraordinary marvel is referred to in a stela from the valley temple as the House of Osiris. One of the primary reasons why anyone would wish to imitate Osiris's journey into the Amdwat is to attain wisdom. The exceptionally polished stone blocks that make up the base perimeter of the Great Pyramid add up to 1,461, which just happens to be the exact number of years in the Sothic Cycle—the complete cycle of Sirius, the star associated with wisdom.

Then there is the choice of building stone, which was far from arbitrary; according to the Law of Correspondence the stone reflected the purpose for which the temple was intended. The building comprises an outer casing of polished Tura limestone and an inner core made from colossal blocks of red granite, none of which are local building materials. Limestone, along with its cousin alabaster, was equated with ritual purity, while granite, a molten stone that hardens and is metamorphosed by pressure, was symbolic of transformation.

If one examines the drawings of the Amdwat painted inside the passage tomb of Thutmosis III and compares them to the interior of the Great Pyramid, there are striking similarities between the myriad of narrow corridors and rooms depicting the Amdwat and the pyramid's claustrophobic chambers and passageways, as though the structure itself was designed as a three-dimensional simulation of the Otherworld. If we bear in mind that the purpose of journeying into the Amdwat was to, metaphorically speaking, polish a rough diamond, then some surprising observations come to light.



The Amdwat texts of Thutmosis III bear an uncanny resemblance to the Great Pyramid's inner passages.

Herodotus and other early historians insisted that the Great Pyramid sat atop a far older chamber that was once accessible from the Nile. This would have been over seven thousand years ago when the climate of Egypt was far wetter and the Nile flowed closer to Giza than it does today. Access was via an underground tunnel that led to a mound surrounded by water, upon which sat a sarcophagus said to represent the original primordial mound of creation. An exit shaft rose above this sarcophagus and led to a rough stone chamber that today lies underneath the pyramid.[7] Another account was given in the seventeenth century by the professor of astronomy at Oxford, John Greaves, who describes two elaborate cave-like architectural rooms attached to the north and west sides, thirty feet in depth and fourteen hundred feet in length, hewn out of the solid rock forming the pyramid's foundation. The entrance is described as narrow, the construction of the rooms intricate, all immersed in darkness, but mostly inaccessible due to dirt. Greaves states that this complex had a connecting passage to the

interior of the pyramid, which even then could not be found due to choking from centuries of accumulated debris.[8]

The rough stone chamber under the Great Pyramid can be visited today. Its central feature is indeed a deep vertical shaft, now filled with debris, so exit is made back along a narrow horizontal shaft that can only be negotiated by crawling on all fours. The shaft then inclines upward—exactly as shown on images of the Amdwat—and into the core of the Great Pyramid. Through a series of connecting passages one finally reaches the Grand Gallery—again ominously similar in design to the Amdwat images—and following a short climb another passage leads into the Queen's Chamber, its angled ceiling bearing a remarkable resemblance to the central chamber below the pyramid of Unas.

Subterranean chamber beneath the Great Pyramid. The well described by Herodotus is in the foreground.

Returning to the Grand Gallery one continues to the top and toward a tiny antechamber, above which colossal granite plugs sit in the ceiling like stone guillotines. A short passage follows, requiring one to bend double

before finally emerging into the so-called King's Chamber. The room's length-to-width reflects the mathematical proportion of the octave, its height the golden mean, nature's mathematical progression; these measurements are mirrored in miniature in the sarcophagus.

The King's Chamber is an image of the perfection of the universe, and by implication, whoever is immersed within becomes an image of that perfection. It makes for the ideal bridal chamber, and as you might already have guessed, no pharaoh was ever found here.

If the theory of the pyramid as an imitation of the soul's ascent from the dark to the light is correct, then it is worth pointing out that the preceding description began in a rough-hewn chamber and culminated in its mirrored opposite, a lustrous box of stone—an accurate allegory of the initiate's transmutation from rough form into polished mirror image of God.

Could the sarcophagus, then, represent the chest Osiris once entered before he was cut into pieces, reassembled, and resurrected as a god?

Writing about the places where the ancient art of resurrection was performed, the Reverend George Oliver, an eighteenth-century Freemason, describes how

> [they] were contrived with much art and ingenuity, and the machinery with which they were fitted up was calculated to excite every passion and affection of the mind. . . . These places were indifferently a pyramid, a pagoda, or a labyrinth, furnished with vaulted rooms, extensive wings connected by open and spacious galleries, multitudes of secret dungeons, subterranean passages, and vistas, terminating in *adyta* [innermost sanctuaries], which were adorned with mysterious symbols carved on the walls and pillars, in every one of which was enfolded some philosophical or moral truth. Sometimes the place of initiation was constructed on a small island in the centre of a lake; a hollow cavern natural or artificial, with sounding domes, torturous passages, narrow orifices, and spacious *sacelli;* and of

> such magnitude as to contain a numerous assembly of persons. . . . And to inspire a still greater veneration, they were properly denominated Tombs, or places of sepulture.[9]

Oliver cites many ancient sources, his accounts approved for publication by the Freemasonic Society, a sect that does not publicly reveal such information lightly.

A comparison to the Egyptian pyramids and their ritual function was made by a traveler in 1638 when he visited the Indian pyramids—the pagodas of Deoghar (‘Home of the Gods’)—whose mention in the Puranas dates the original complex to the prehistoric era.[10] These temples are of an arresting height, accessed by one small, solitary opening so that no light appears within except for what squeezes through the low entrance. In the center of the main pagoda is a dark chamber where religious rites were performed. The eyewitness describes the attendant chambers used by the priests and initiates as resembling excavated grottoes rather than recesses fit for practicing religious people. And just like their Egyptian counterparts, some chambers communicate with each other via narrow, uncomfortable passages.[11]

None of these places were ever known to have housed dead people. But living candidates, on the other hand, made good use of them, walked out into the light of dawn, risen from the dead, in far better shape than when they entered, precisely as promised on the temple walls: that sacred space exists to recreate the individual “as a god, as a bright star.”[12]

Part of the twenty-square-mile temple complex of Deoghar, one of the twelve most sacred abodes of the Eastern god of resurrection, Siva. Note the beehive domes.

15

Green Men, White Knights

As we approach the Christian era, contemporary commentators decry the degradation and loss of understanding of the Mysteries, due in part to their meaning becoming obfuscated through translation into other languages, not to mention the abuse at the hands of a centralized and corrupted priesthood. Too often the sacred teachings mutated into a control mechanism to inspire awe in lay people or to extract large sums of money for the privilege of delivering divine guidance, to the effect that by AD 364 the Roman emperor Valentinian published a law forbidding nocturnal esoteric activities, the aim of which was the prevention of indecencies taking place in establishments operating under the guise of Mysteries schools. The notable exception was Greece, where the correct performance of the sacred Mysteries was still understood to have a positive influence on the welfare of society.

As orthodox Christianity became even more orthodox, particularly under the rule of Theodosius, the ancient rites were obliterated, temples of initiation closed, and its practitioners regularly burned alive. Needless to say, secrets that had already been performed secretly were now even more secret. They went underground, literally and figuratively, enduring in parts of Greece until the eighth century, and in Wales and Scotland right up to the eleventh century before being resurrected by another secret sect, the inner brotherhood of the Knights Templar.

To illustrate the point, here is Article VII of the Templar's *Rule of the Elected Brothers,* discovered quite by accident by the Inquisition as they ruffled through the pockets of arrested Templar Master Roncelyn de Fos:

> Build in your houses meeting places that are large and hidden that can be accessed by underground tunnels so that the brothers can go to meetings without the risk of getting into trouble. . . . In the houses of unelected Brothers, it is prohibited to conduct certain materials pertaining to the philosophical sciences, or the transmutation of base metals into gold and silver. This shall only be undertaken in secret and hidden places.[1]

"Base metals" was a thinly veiled reference to uninitiated members, with "gold and silver" being the qualities of the risen hero (sun/gold) upon uniting with the divine virgin (moon/silver).

There exists an overwhelming body of evidence that the Templars followed rituals relating to raising the dead and in the tradition of the Essenes.[2] How the Templars came upon this knowledge lies in their obsession to dig under Temple Mount, whereupon the knights discovered scrolls outlining the beliefs and practices of its former occupants, the Essenes. These had been buried shortly before those holy men in white were forced out of Jerusalem by an invading Roman army.[3]

The similarities between both brotherhoods are remarkable: both favored a monastic existence, wore white habits, disposed of their wealth one year after being ordained, believed in two levels of membership, and despite a broad outer group, only initiates were allowed into the inner *sanctum* of their temples.[4] Both undertook vows of obedience and absolute secrecy absolutely, to the point where adepts took the teachings of The Way to the grave. And no wonder, both orders claimed to be in possession of very secret information offering nothing less than paradise itself.

As we saw earlier at Gisors, the Templars made use of restricted passageways and chambers in a style similar to Egyptian protocol. One of numerous Templar sites, the most famous of which still exists in Portugal, was in the town of Tomar.

Tomar seems like an invented name. It was originally spelled Thamara, the Arabic word for palm tree, except the local climate of the

period was too cold to support such a species; the palm, on the other hand, is the symbol of the resurrected Osiris. In Portuguese, the word means ‘to drink,’ but since it is impossible to drink a town, obviously the term is a euphemism, for indeed when one partakes in the Mysteries one is said to “drink of the Knowledge,” one imbibes from the “cup of everlasting life.” To add to the mystery, Thamara was also the name given to the daughter of Jesus and Mary Magdala.[5]

It was in Tomar that the Templars built their mother church, and as was their custom, they dedicated it to Mary. During restoration work in the 1940s a secret tunnel was found leaving its crypt and taking a mile-long excursion under the nearby river bed, the town square, then veering uphill before emerging beside the foundations of their most enigmatic monument, the *charola,* which literally translates as ‘a salver.’

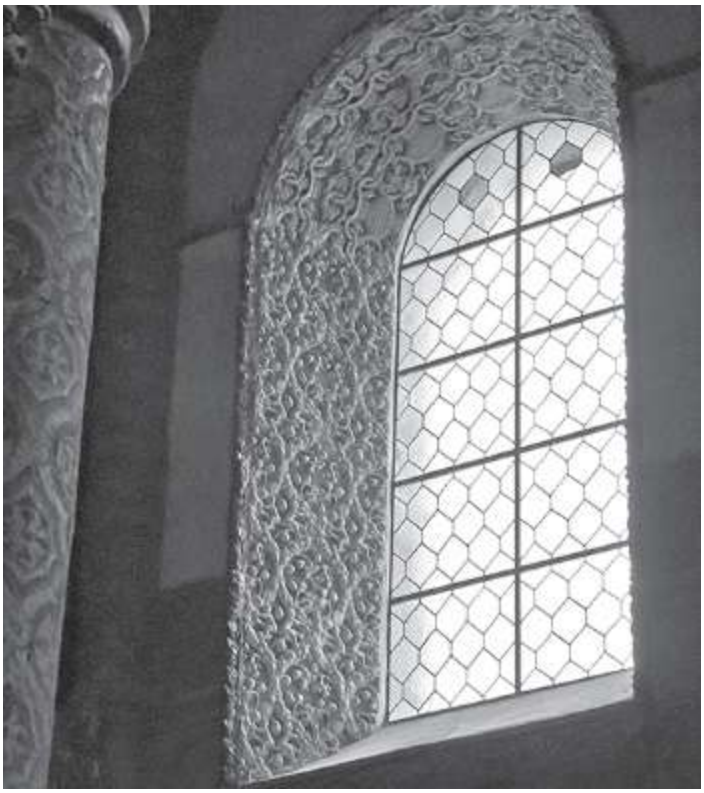
A salver is a ceremonial silver tray and the very object upon which rests the Grail, as told in the famous medieval story.[6]

The Grail myth is an allegorical description of the hero’s arduous journey of self-discovery. In the end he is wedded to the beautiful maiden Sophia—the Greek term for wisdom—whereupon his eyes are opened, he becomes enlightened, and is figuratively raised from the dead.

Ascribing such an unusual name to the charola of Tomar implies that the building is the focal point of a resurrection play, and a mysterious one at that. This polygonal edifice is listed as a church and yet never did it have an altar; even more curious, during sieges the people of Tomar were never permitted inside the charola, arguably the safest, most secure building inside the citadel. And had they been allowed, getting inside would have proved awkward, for this building had no door. The only way in was from underneath and through the floor.[7]

The Templars' primary temple. Originally it had no altar and no door. Knights and initiates would enter from under the floor. Tomar, Portugal.

Inside the charola of Tomar. Beneath its floor lies a hidden ritual chamber.



Beehive window.

It was at this moment that, standing inside the charola, I gazed up and noticed something unique to this Templar monument: the opaque white-and-gold window glass was shaped entirely of honeycombs. I was standing inside a beehive, the ancient talisman of resurrection and the Otherworld, later adopted by the Knights Templar and their benefactor, the Cistercian abbot Bernard de Clairvaux. If so, it was an indication that the Templar's bridal chamber must surely lie beneath my feet. If only I could lift the flagstone floor, even if for just one second.

Perhaps I didn't have to. An oral account by an elderly resident of Valado dos Frades recalls how, during restorations at the end of the nineteenth century,

> it was the habit of one of the master masons to return home and register the alterations made inside the castle, because these would continue until much of what was old would be made unrecognizable or made to disappear. One of the things that riled him the most was the disfiguration of the beautiful and intriguing

> Arab pathway that the old monks of the Temple used in their ceremonies and led directly to the basement of the Temple church [the charola].[8]

Even in those days the brothers living in the adjacent convent used to share, from memory, stories with the masons of how Templar Master Gualdino Paes brought back from the Holy Land the plans of the Holy Sepulcher that were to be used for the construction of the charola. Master Gualdino also ordered a pathway leading to it to be constructed in the Arabic style, and both were used not just for religious ceremonies but also for the investiture of new knights. The monks referred to it as the "gate to the underworld," its doorway resting on very old stonework upon whose uprights the Templars carved dragons, and on the supported lintel, a kind of winged serpent.[9]

During recent attempts to beautify the perimeter of the castle of Tomar —inside whose walls the charola stands—an area was cleared around the original gate to reveal a doorway into a cave. On its lintel is carved a winged serpent flanked by the heads of two dragons from whose mouths emanate a curl of breaths. A drawing made in 1918 shows the engravings still in their entirety, accompanied by a description of which parts of the Arab pathway were visible inside the subterranean passages and led to the bridal chamber beneath the charola.[10]

In 1988 an international group of experts attempted to locate said chamber, knowing there are entries, now sealed, and that the Templars built an access tunnel ninety feet below the ground. They liaised with the Institute of Geophysics whose ground-penetrating radar would be capable of detecting cavities up to 120 feet deep without leaving as much as a pinprick on the floor, yet despite this obviously unobtrusive and nondestructive scientific technique the Portuguese Ministry of Culture inexplicably prohibited all investigations.[11]

The bridal chamber may remain elusive but at least some of the knowledge that was imparted there is known, and it shows how the Templars exhumed an esoteric tradition and practiced it privately. To quote Article XVIII of the *Rule of the Elected Brothers:*

> The neophyte will be taken to the archives where he will be taught the mysteries of the divine science, of God, of infant Jesus, of the true Bafomet [Source of Wisdom], of the New Babylon, of the nature of things, of eternal life as well as the secret science, the Great Philosophy, Abraxas [the Source of everything] and the talismans—all things that must be carefully hidden from ecclesiastics admitted to the Order.[12]

During initiation, candidates pushed away a proffered laurel wreath while uttering the phrase "My God is my victory," the same idiom used in the Mithraic degree, Miles.[13]

CONNECTING TWO PALM TREES

There is another piece of evidence that shows the Templars were the latest in a long line of sects following a tradition of living resurrection, and it involves an ancient method of placing temples of veneration according to an underlying geodetic blueprint.

Immediately below the charola sits the charming town of Tomar—the palm tree—in whose main square stands a curious church the Templars dedicated to their other hero, John the Baptist. Inset into the front wall is a pyramidal bas-relief depicting what appear to be a large dog and a lion. An ancient Egyptian looking at this would make perfect sense of it, for the dog represents the Dog Star, Sirius, the embodiment of knowledge; the lion represents Regulus, the brightest star in Leo, long associated with the key to the Mysteries as well as a gateway to the records of all knowledge.

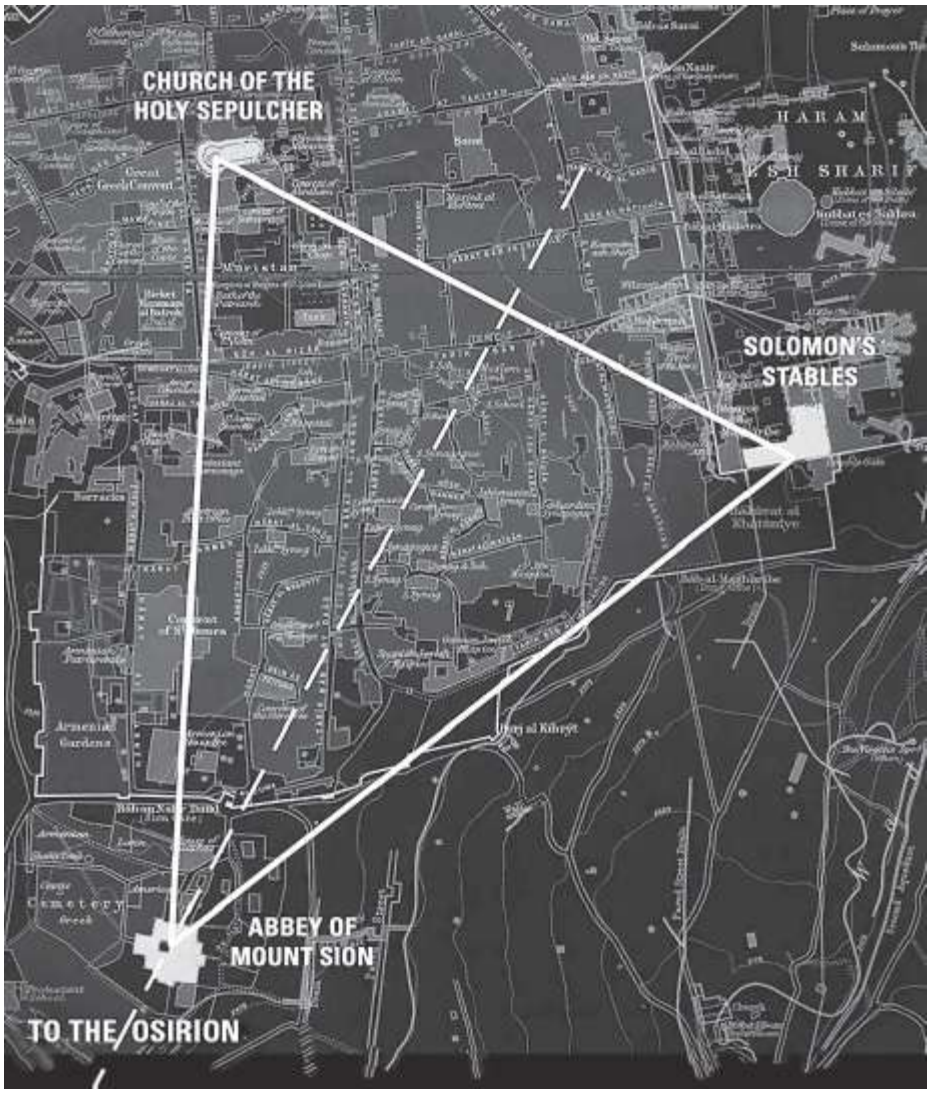
The story gets spicier inside the church, which is packed with pagan effigies, notably the dragon and the resurrecting god of nature, the Green Man. If you were to score an invisible line from the center of the charola to the relief, then thread the needle through two pillars inside the church marked by the effigies, the line extends two thousand miles to Jerusalem—specifically the Abbey de Notre Dame of Mount Sion, once home to another secretive order of monks named the Order of Sion, the force behind the founding of the Templars.[14]

Relief of Sirius and Regulus.

Green man and dragons. John the Baptist Church, Tomar.

Still in Jerusalem, if we then plot the other two prime Templar locations—the church of the Holy Sepulcher and Solomon's stables—the three sites form a perfect isosceles triangle, like the tip of pyramid. When this triangle is bisected, the imaginary line extends all the way to Egypt and the Osirion at Abydos, that other House of Osiris.

The tradition of using secret initiation chambers in which to practice the Mysteries or perform living resurrection was common throughout medieval Europe. They are found beneath countless pre-Christian churches and Gothic cathedrals, virtually all of them erected above preexisting ancient temples where identical rituals were earlier performed by Druids and other Gnostic sects. Some sites are well known: Chartres Cathedral, Mont St. Michel, and St. Germain des Prés, which itself is built over the original temple of Isis in Paris, from which the city gets its name. The Templars simply revived the corpse of a tradition long made dormant by ecclesiastic suppression, while their progeny, the Freemasons, followed suit, as the Freemason Reverend George Oliver once more elucidates:



The Templar's Jerusalem triangle.

In some of the philosophical degrees, the place of meeting is figuratively termed a cavern, in imitation, probably, of the spurious Freemasonry, which was always held in the bowels of the earth; and the most stupendous specimens of the fact are visible to this day in the Indian, Persian, and Egyptian subterranean temples. In some places, entire mountains were excavated, and the cavern was constructed with cells, chambers, galleries, and streets, also supported by columns, and forming a subterranean labyrinth. Examples of this practice are found in the excavations underneath the great pyramid of Egypt; at Baia and Sena Julia in Italy; near Nauplia, in Greece; at Elephanta and

> Salsette, in India; at Ceylon; and in Malta is a cave, where we are told that "the rock is not only cut into spacious passages, but hollowed out into numerous contiguous halls and apartments."[15]

A SCOTTISH PLAY IN BLACK AND WHITE.

On the origins of Freemasonry—first published in 1787—the Chevalier de Berage remarks, "Their Metropolitan Lodge is situated on the Mountain of Heredom where the first Lodge was held in Europe. . . . This mountain is situated between the West and North of Scotland at sixty miles from Edinburgh."[16]

Sixty miles northwest of Edinburgh there is no Mount Heredom; instead there is Mount Schiehallion, the geodetic center of Scotland and its most sacred mountain, which we encountered earlier (p. 67). How did one become mistaken for the other?

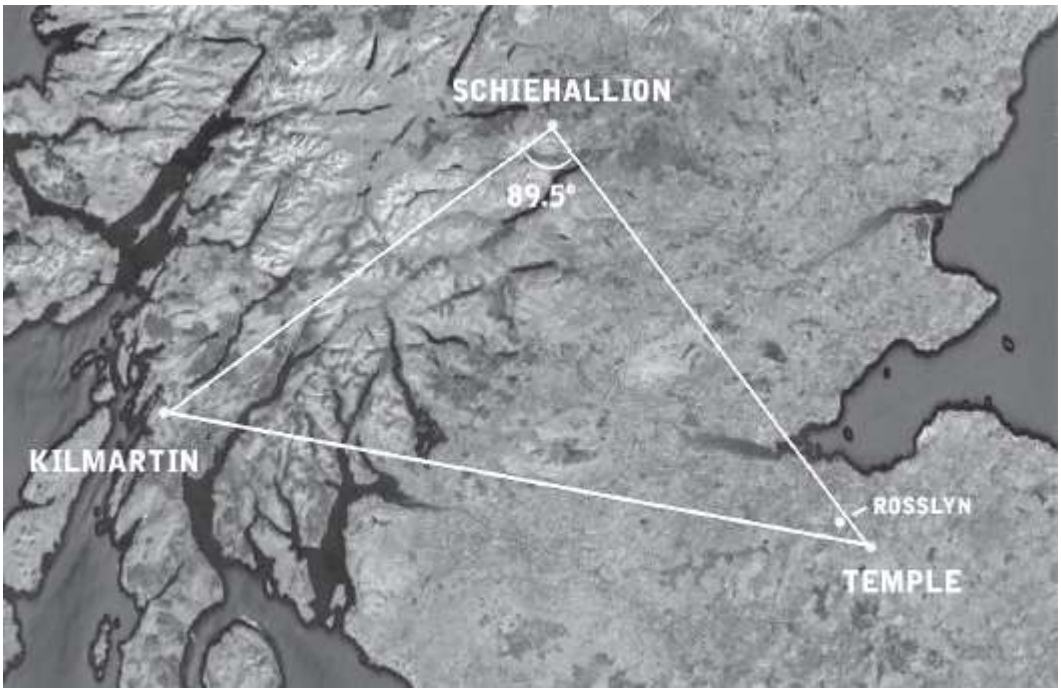
In the fourteenth century a Templar Knight called Robert of Heredom was initiated in a cave on Mount Carmel. When the Order was rounded up by the French king, Robert moved to Scotland to be initiated again, this time inside the ceremonial cave on Schiehallion by a group called Sons of the Valley, who constituted a secret movement at the time. Joined by six more Brothers of the Cross, Robert of Heredom rode out to his new domicile at daybreak, as though signaling a rebirth, and subsequently resurrected the Order of the Temple in Scotland following its destruction in France.[17]

If this is indeed the spot where the first Metropolitan Lodge of Europe was held, it marks the establishment of Freemasonry in Scotland at around 1314—three centuries prior to the official date.[18] It also means that Masonic ceremonies follow early Celtic Christian rituals performed since time immemorial on this mountain, as the Reverend Oliver writes in *The History of Initiation*:

> The degree of H.R.D.M. [Heredem] . . . may not have been originally Masonic. It appears rather to have been connected with

> the ceremonies of the early Christians. These ceremonies are believed to have been introduced by the Culdees in the second or third centuries of the Christian era. Operative masonry existed in Britain at that era, as is evidenced by the building of a church at York, and a monastery at Iona; and it was in active operation before the twelfth century.[19]

In the twelfth century the Templars set up their first preceptory in Scotland, in the hamlet of Baile nan Trodach (now called Temple), a few miles southeast of Edinburgh; their second main area of interest was Kilmartin, with its plethora of Neolithic sacred sites and ritual chambers. Together with the ritual cave on Schiehallion, the three locations form an equilateral triangle to an astonishing degree of accuracy, in effect creating a holy trinity of temples sharing similar purposes, and in accordance with the ancient world tradition of siting sacred places in perfect triangles.[20]



Geometric alignment of Templar sites in Scotland. The margin of error is just half a degree.

Three centuries later, an edifice rampant with pagan, esoteric, and Masonic symbolism was built just up the road from Temple—Rosslyn

Chapel. In its time the building was given a stay of execution on the express orders of England's pillager-in-chief, Oliver Cromwell, despite every other edifice of its kind in the area being razed to the ground. The fact that Cromwell was a Freemason may have played a small part in his decision.

One of the more perplexing stone carvings in Rosslyn Chapel appears on its exterior southwestern corner. It is of a man wearing a blindfold and a rope loosely draped around his neck, led by what appears to be a knight wearing a Templar tunic.[21] A Freemason today would see in this a perfect depiction, even despite the weathered stone, of the ritual initiation of the candidate into the First Degree, one of Masonry's most important ceremonies.

The First Degree.

The real enigma of Rosslyn Chapel is that it features virtually no Christian symbolism, and evidence suggests it was built in the image of the

Temple of Solomon, from where Masonry also claims its roots.[22] At the time of its construction in the fifth century there already existed an adjacent church dedicated to St. Matthew, aligned to face the solstice sunrise on December 21 and as such most likely built above a preexisting pagan temple, so why the need for an additional chapel where, aside from members of the St. Clair family, the congregation was regularly outnumbered by the chapel staff?[23] Perhaps the enigmatic chapel was designed with another end in mind.

The visitor to Rosslyn will first be overwhelmed by the richness of detail. Three of its fourteen pillars in particular—the Journeyman, the Apprentice, and the Master Mason—represent the central tenet of the Solomonic principle: Wisdom + Establishment = Strength. A short flight of stairs to the right descends into a room in sharp contrast to the one above; for the crypt is mostly devoid of decoration save for some unusual mason's marks and an eroded image of a half-finished arch. What is even curiouser is that this crypt never housed a body, and at one time its western wall opened into a labyrinth of tunnels, one leading to a metal shrine hidden beneath the center of the chapel above. This entrance was walled up at some point in the past; the metal shrine was only recently confirmed thanks to ground-penetrating radar but remains inaccessible as far as is publicly known,[24] along with a second crypt that lies concealed below the first.

Is it possible these chambers were used as part of Masonic resurrection ceremonies? The Masonic tradition is, to all intents and purposes, a reenactment and continuation of the king-making ritual performed at Saqqara, even the use of the white apron in the Sed festival, right down to the ceiling in Masonic halls that, like Unas's chamber, is adorned with stars. Its initiation ritual of the murdered apprentice is a reenactment of the life of Pharaoh Seqnenre Taa (also spelled Tao, The Way),[25] while the ritual admittance into the Third Degree—where the candidate is raised from a figurative grave, his blindfold removed, and pronounced risen from the dead, as also enacted by female members of the Grand Lodge of Belgium—was similarly performed by the Essenes at Qumran.[26]

Apprentice Pillar. Rosslyn Chapel.

And like so many sacred places where living resurrection was practiced, Rosslyn's crypt is entered from the west and exited toward the east.

This brings us to the chapel's central feature, the Apprentice Pillar. Beautifully carved, possibly by a Portuguese mason (given how Portuguese masons were brought over to assist in the building work, and the pillar is in the unique Manueline style found in Tomar), it features four spiraling vegetations rising forth from the mouths of eight dragons around its base.

These overt symbols of the regenerative power of nature are further enhanced by the inclusion around the chapel of dozens of representations of the Green Man, symbol of nature's resurrection, culminating in the most extraordinary boss of a Green Man staring down from the chapel ceiling.

The building was founded in 1446 on the autumn equinox, no doubt accompanied by a ritual filled with symbolism, not least of all because, just before sunrise, the two brightest objects on the eastern horizon were Venus and the star long associated with the key to the Mysteries and gateway to the records of all knowledge, Regulus.[27] Around the same period, 1,100 miles to the southwest, the same stellar alignment would have been used by the Templars as they began to build their church dedicated to John the Baptist in Tomar, the one featuring a host of Green Men and a bas-relief of Regulus the lion.

The Green Man, one of dozens in Rosslyn Chapel.

Divine Virgin and child, homage to Isis and Horus. Note the twin towers above her head, the castle of Mary and Martha, emblem of Mary Magdala and the vow of allegiance pledged by the Templars. Rosslyn.

In time Rosslyn's east window would come to emphasize these prominent stellar objects and their values. Its geometry is based on the square and the circle, two forms representing the perfect mating of the masculine-material with the feminine-ethereal, the very process required of "the single man" that allows him passage to the final phase of living resurrection.

But there's more. Just above this elegant work of glass and masonry is a small hole that, from a distance, appears circular but in truth is shaped in the form of a five-pointed star, emblem of the Divine Virgin, Isis. Made of red glass, it lights up with the rising of the sun at equinox, the moment light and dark are held in perfect equilibrium, like a checkerboard. The effect would have been even more pronounced when the original, smaller window was in place, which darkened the chapel considerably and made a person feel as though immersed in a sacred cave.

Like a continuation of the Mysteries: the checkerboard, symbol of the risen and the dead, outside John the Baptist Church, Tomar.

But it was outside where the stone masons, putting the final touches to the roof, left the most telling symbol of all: a stone beehive featuring a hole shaped like a five-petal rose, the very symbol of Venus.

16

The Science of the Otherworld

A custom was once practiced in Egypt where priests performed orations at dawn in every room of the temple as though waking a sentient being from slumber. Perhaps they were right, because the temple is the physical embodiment of a natural force—a god—it is a mirror of the perfection of the cosmos, and as such it functions as a regulator in the proper conduct of human affairs, exactly as specified in the Book of What Lies in the Amdwat on the walls of the temple of Edfu: "Whosoever shall make a copy thereof, and shall know it upon the earth, it shall act as a magical protector for him, in heaven and in earth, unfailingly and regularly and eternally."

Some temples are designed as elaborate markers of time, their angles, geometry, alignment, and geodetic position reflecting a preoccupation with astronomy, astrology, the maximum and minimum cycles of the sun and moon, even the Earth's laborious precessional cycle, which turns the mill of heaven every 25,920 years.

Others are designed like sentient machines to ensure the journey and return of the soul without impairment.

Just as the setting sun marks the gateway into the night, so the temple represents the horizon into the world of spirit. The immersion of the initiate inside a chamber from which all external light is excluded is an obvious replication of the womb of the Earth Mother, the dark mimicking the inky blackness of the universe in its primordial state. It is the stillness preceding the entrance into the Otherworld. The only illumination comes from the initiate's very own inner spiritual radiance.

Temple of Edfu, covered from head to toe in useful ancient wisdom, from temple building to how to access the Amdwat.

Far from being mystical mumbo jumbo, these observations have scientific merit. The absence of light makes the pineal gland more active, generating the chemicals melatonin and pinolene, which allow for the creation of the hallucinogen DMT,[1] a combination that paves the way for an altered state of awareness and shamanic journeying. Chemical production commences after sunset and reaches its highest point of activity between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. Coincidentally this is the hour preferred by Buddhists for meditation and by medieval monks for *matins;* it is also the hour when the vast majority of recorded hospital deaths occur and the majority of babies are born. Perhaps these situations are linked because this happens to be the time frame when the furthermost regions on Earth are shielded from the sun's geomagnetic field (GMF). Alterations in the GMF stimulate the pineal because they affect the production of seratonin and melatonin, further increasing the ability of psychic phenomena and clairvoyant activity.[2] It is the hour when the veil between worlds is thinnest.

The combination of chemistry and sensory-deprived environments such as dolmens, Neolithic mounds, pyramid chambers, and caves serves to affect the candidate's state of consciousness as it seeks passage into the Otherworld. But there are more elements at work in this spiritual technology, as though temple architects left nothing to chance. All sacred places, without exception, sit on the crossroads of the Earth's electromagnetic pathways of energy,[3] and since the GMF interacts with these terrestrial lines of force as well as the pineal, sacred places become ideal chariots for journeying.

This observation is encapsulated in the Hopi creation myth. In their legend, one of the first humans made by the Creator is sent to the South Pole with a drum, where he hears the heartbeat of the Earth. As he beats a rhythm in sympathetic harmony, a surge of life energy is directed into the center of Gaia, sending streams of life force to the surface whereupon she becomes abundant with life. However, some places became significantly more abundant with this energy. The Hopi called them "the spots of the fawn," and over time they took on the mantle of sacred places and became the hot spots upon which all great temples now stand.

The ancient Egyptians concur. Written traditions such as the Edfu Building Texts inform us how groups of sages and creator gods named Aku Shemsu Hor (Shining Ones, Followers of Horus) embarked on temple-building programs at "carefully chosen locations," the development of which was intended to bring about "the resurrection of the former world of the gods" following its destruction by a global flood,[4] which has now been accurately dated to 9703 BC.[5]

That the siting of temples should have been "carefully chosen" is an understatement in light of recent scientific discoveries. It was suggested as early as 9000 BC in the Yajur Veda that the Earth's surface is rife with a force that meanders like an invisible river whose tributaries are mirrored in space: "Snakes whichsoever move along the Earth. Which are in sky and in heaven . . . which are the arrows of sorcerers." (A sorcerer being a person knowledgeable in the art of manipulating the source of subtle energies.) It took 11,008 years before NASA, using highly sensitive detection equipment, validated said sacred text by proving that "the Earth is linked to the Sun by a network of magnetic portals which open every eight minutes."[6]

These magnetic portals are influenced by the solar wind that rises every dawn and intensifies the Earth's geomagnetic field. At night this field weakens, then picks up at dawn and the cycle repeats. This in turn interacts with the Earth's terrestrial currents to generate hot spots of energy named by science as *conductivity discontinuities;* the Sioux have known them for millennia as *skan.* And in temples this energy does some very unusual things.

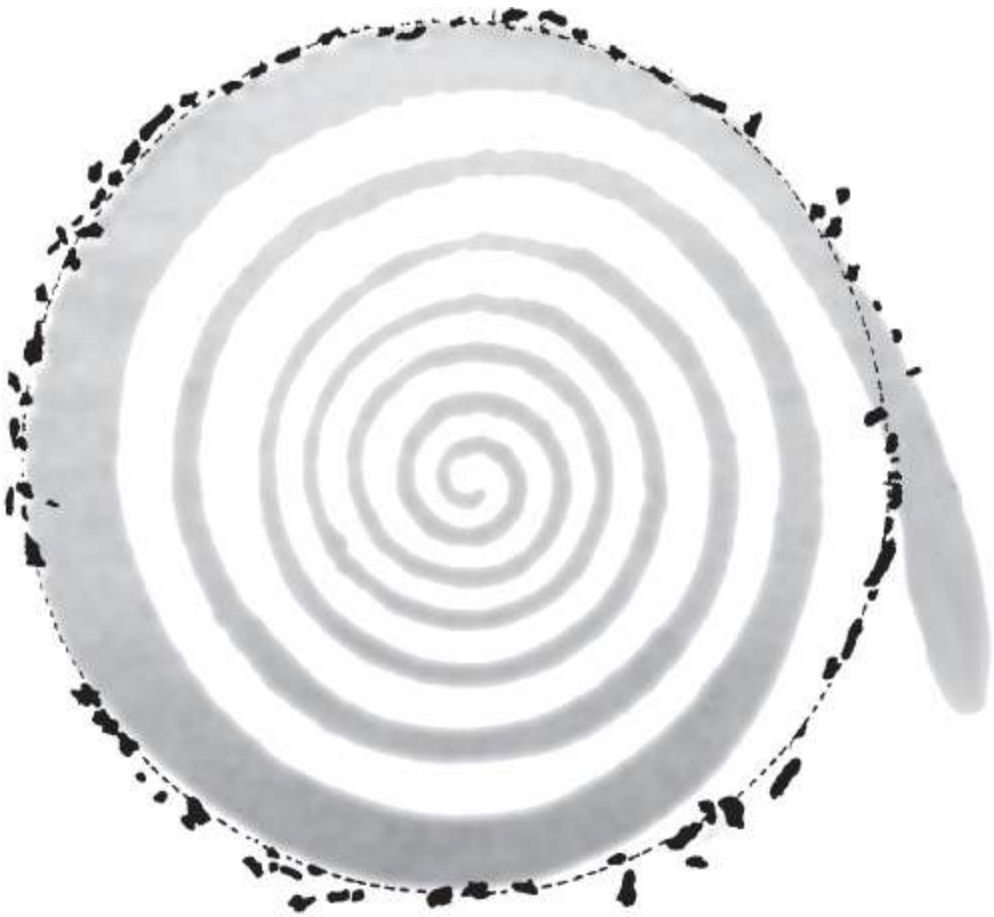
Whenever scientists take to studying ancient places of veneration they are constantly rewarded. Magnetic readings inside the world's biggest stone circle at Avebury have been found to fade away at night to a far greater level than can be accounted for under natural circumstances. At sunrise, they charge back, with the ground current from the nearby land attracted to Avebury's surrounding ditch just as magnetic fluctuations inside the temple reach their maximum. The effect is further amplified by the stones being deliberately positioned with their magnetic fields pointing toward the center of the circle, while along its processional avenue, the stones are arranged by their alternating positive and negative poles. The same alternating polarity is found in the orthostats that hold up the passageway into Newgrange mound.[7]

Avebury stone circle.

Such sacred places are designed to conduct a natural current, concentrate it, then release it into the site, sometimes at double the rate of the surrounding land.[8]

Magnetometer readings at the Rollright stones—an atmospheric stone circle in central England—visually reveal how this energy is attracted to the temple via its three offset entrance stones. The energy then spirals within its perimeter and down into what looks like an invisible rabbit hole.[9]

In Carnac, a decade of scientific measuring of the electrical and magnetic fields around the thousands of menhirs and stone circles proves how the stones store electrical current and release it during the day, or when someone comes into contact with them.[10] Furthermore the GMF also shows great fluctuation in seismically sensitive fault lines, so it is not by accident that a disproportionate number of sacred sites stand on fault lines, the megalithic metropolis around Carnac being a superb example. The same is true of the 286 existing stone circles in Britain, 235 of which are located on fault lines.[11]



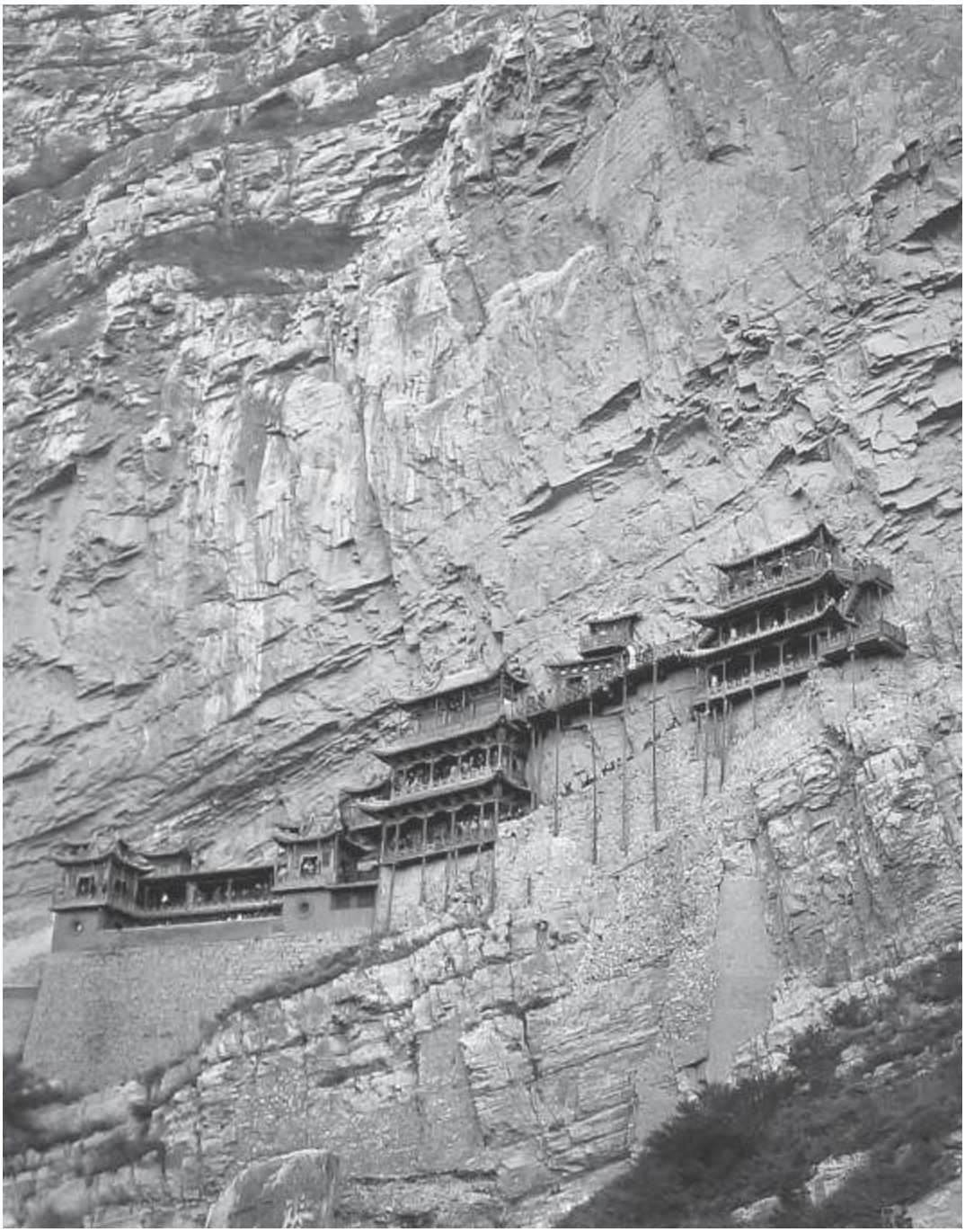
Magnetometer map of the energy flow inside the Rollright stone circle.

So, far from being static structures, ancient sacred sites are living, breathing organisms, exactly as the ancient Egyptian priests claimed when they treated temples as though rousing a living being from slumber.

All this helps explain why so many temples are located in what at first appear to be irrational and, frankly, dangerous locations. For example, the church of St. Michel d'Aiguilhe (France), Meteora Monastery (Greece), or Sigiriya (Sri Lanka), which features paintings of unidentified female figures in a cave 400 feet up a freestanding volcanic rock throat that until recently was practically inaccessible. In Bandeleer, New Mexico, the Native American kiva might seem a sensible location for a vision quest into the Otherworld until you discover it requires an inconvenient climb 100 feet up a vertical cliff face to reach a cave where, sitting inside the kiva's circular adobe chamber, participants come under the influence of two magnetic lines that just happen to cross exactly where the structure was built.

Or consider the temples that grew from caves associated with creative spirits and visions of a divine virgin and were originally used by initiates or hermits seeking mystical experiences of the Otherworld: Abuna Yemata Guh (Ethiopia), Sumela Monastery (Turkey), Taktsang Palphug Monastery (Bhutan), Popa Taungkalat Monastery (Burma), or the wooden temple Hsuan-k'ung Ssu, which rests on oak crossbeams set in holes chiseled into the vertical cliff face of China's sacred mountain Heng Shan as though its architect was perfectly comfortable with both antigravity and vertigo.

Temple of Popa Taungkalat.



Why build on the flat plain below when the vertical cliff will do? *Temple of Hsuan-k'ung Ssu, China*.

Temples generate an electromagnetic environment capable of stimulating the human body, which itself is electromagnetic, further stimulating its state of awareness. Even the type of stone was carefully considered to add to the effect. It has always been a curiosity why early

mankind chose to use not just some of the hardest rocks on Earth to make sacred sites, but that they should have chosen to source them as much as 400 miles away from the construction sites. What the majority of these stones share in common is they all contain high amounts of magnetite, in effect creating a local magnetic field that stimulates the millions of magnetite particles already inside the human skull, not to mention the direct effect on the dissolved iron in the bloodstream as it circulates around the body's arterial canals.

The otherworldly effect of this spiritual technology is commemorated in innumerable tales of people spending the night in stone circles only to come face-to-face with faery folk. The most recurring theme in folklore describes the stones coming alive at night to become a circle of women, lured there by a faery musician to dance past midnight until the cockcrow, whereupon the women once again transmute into stones. One such place in southern Britain has two attendant standing stones named the Pipers, and indeed they emit ultrasonic signals and amplified electromagnetic fields at certain times of the day as though wandering from slumber to wakefulness.

The two most prominent stones of the Castlerigg stone circle register an electromagnetic charge at dawn, while those of the Rollright stone circle even emit an audible hum. The same effects occur in the standing stones of Brittany. It's as though the legends encapsulate the actual behavior of sonic and telluric energy discovered by latter-day scientific equipment.

Many temples share another thing in common in that they reference the lunar cycle. Besides being a convenient calendar, research shows that, after several days placed in an environment of total sensory deprivation, the human body begins to acclimatize to the dark by establishing a 25-hour biological clock—24.85 hours to be precise—which happens to be the time cycle of the moon's orbit around the Earth.[12] Since one of the aims of the initiate during the resurrection ritual is the pursuit of wisdom, it is worth pointing out that the Egyptian god of wisdom, Djehuti, not only adopts as his talisman the crescent moon, but in addition to Osiris he is the deity present at the entrance into the Amdwat.

When a team of scientists measuring the effects of human consciousness looked into why sacred places are used for shamanic ritual, they found an extraordinary correlation between the two. Initially the team from Princeton University was gathering data for the Global Consciousness Project using a computer called a random event generator (REG). In field studies, the team found consistent deviations from expected randomicity in data taken in situations where groups become unified by something of common interest. The evidence infers that a consciousness field exists and that intentions or emotional states structuring the field are conveyed as information absorbed into the distribution of output of the computer.[13]

The scientists then conducted experiments at sacred sites, intrigued by whether the sacredness was due to their collective use over time or because they were imbued with a certain energetic resonance in the first place, or because a combination of forces such as stone, electromagnetism, and so forth made them so.

During an initial experiment at the Native American landscape temple of Mato Tipila in Wyoming (since named Devil's Tower, sadly), the REG's output was demonstrably affected by a medicine man ceremony. It was then decided to see what effect meditation groups would have on the REG when meditating at places of interest that were not necessarily sacred. The machine was influenced only to a small statistical degree.[14]

When the groups were taken to Luxor, Karnak, and several pyramids, the effects were six times greater than ordinary trials in the field, in fact they represented the largest ever seen. But what astonished team leader Roger Nelson was that the results from twenty-seven temples were even higher whenever he walked around the sites in respectful silence, with a portable version of the machine in his pocket. For him it proved that the spirit of place itself registered effects as high as the power emanating from a meditating group.[15]

Don't try this at home. Pilgrim trail on Hua Shan. China.

While the temples resonated a high degree of consciousness by themselves, the combination of focused group veneration *plus* the temple created an expanded consciousness that had a marked effect on the machine.

Such modern-day experiments validate ancient texts such as the 14,000-year-old Puranas of the Tamil culture that categorically state how the gods built temples so that people can discover themselves by experiencing the Otherworld. The temples' geomagnetic, geodetic, acoustic,

and geometric correspondences generate environments that allow for the journey of the soul and its return to a living body, by which the initiate is said to become like a god, as a bright star.

The Edfu Building Texts actually make light of why so many temples were once built across the face of the Earth: “We’ll go on building temples until people discover the perfect temple that lies within them.”

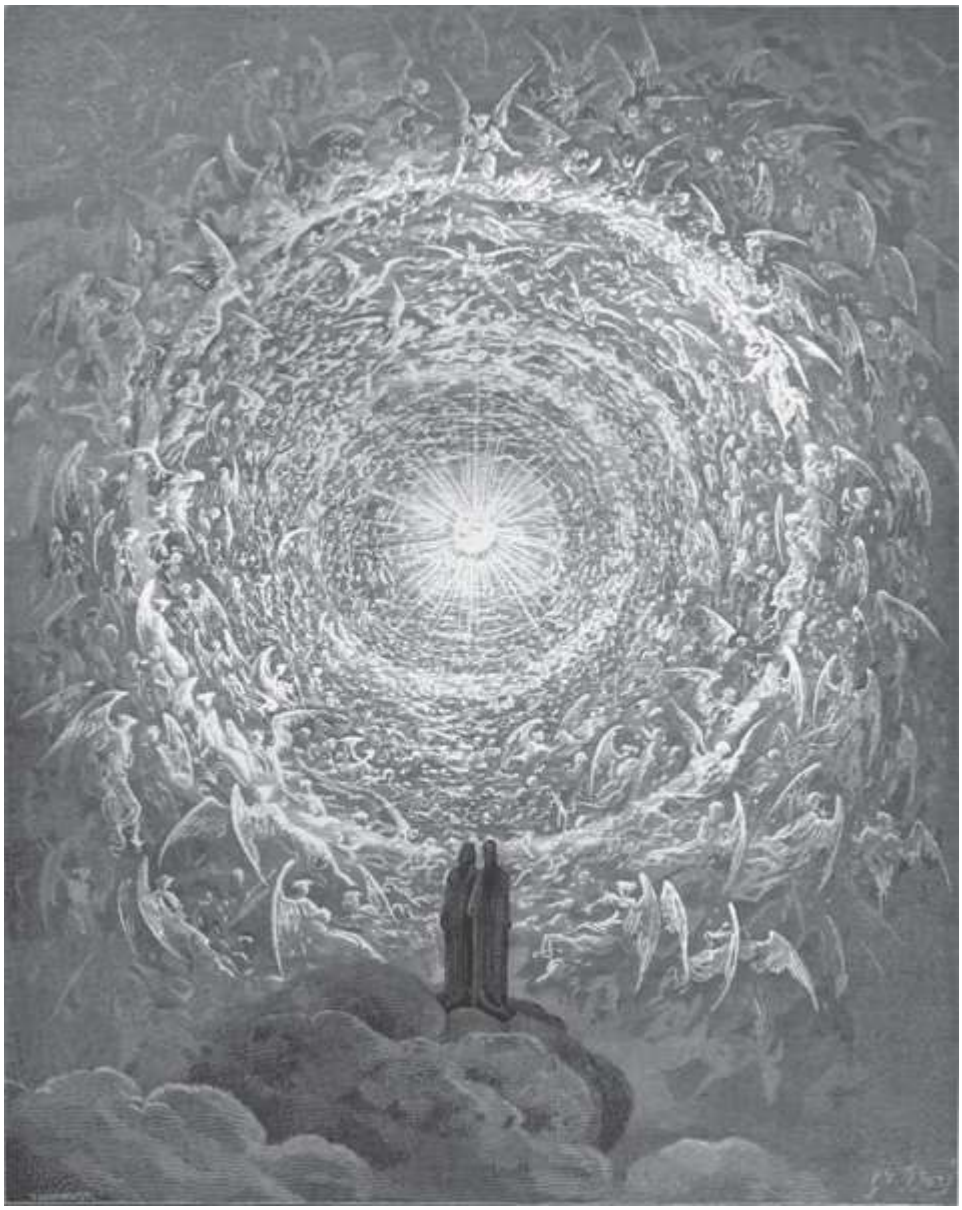
17

The Metamorphosis of the Soul

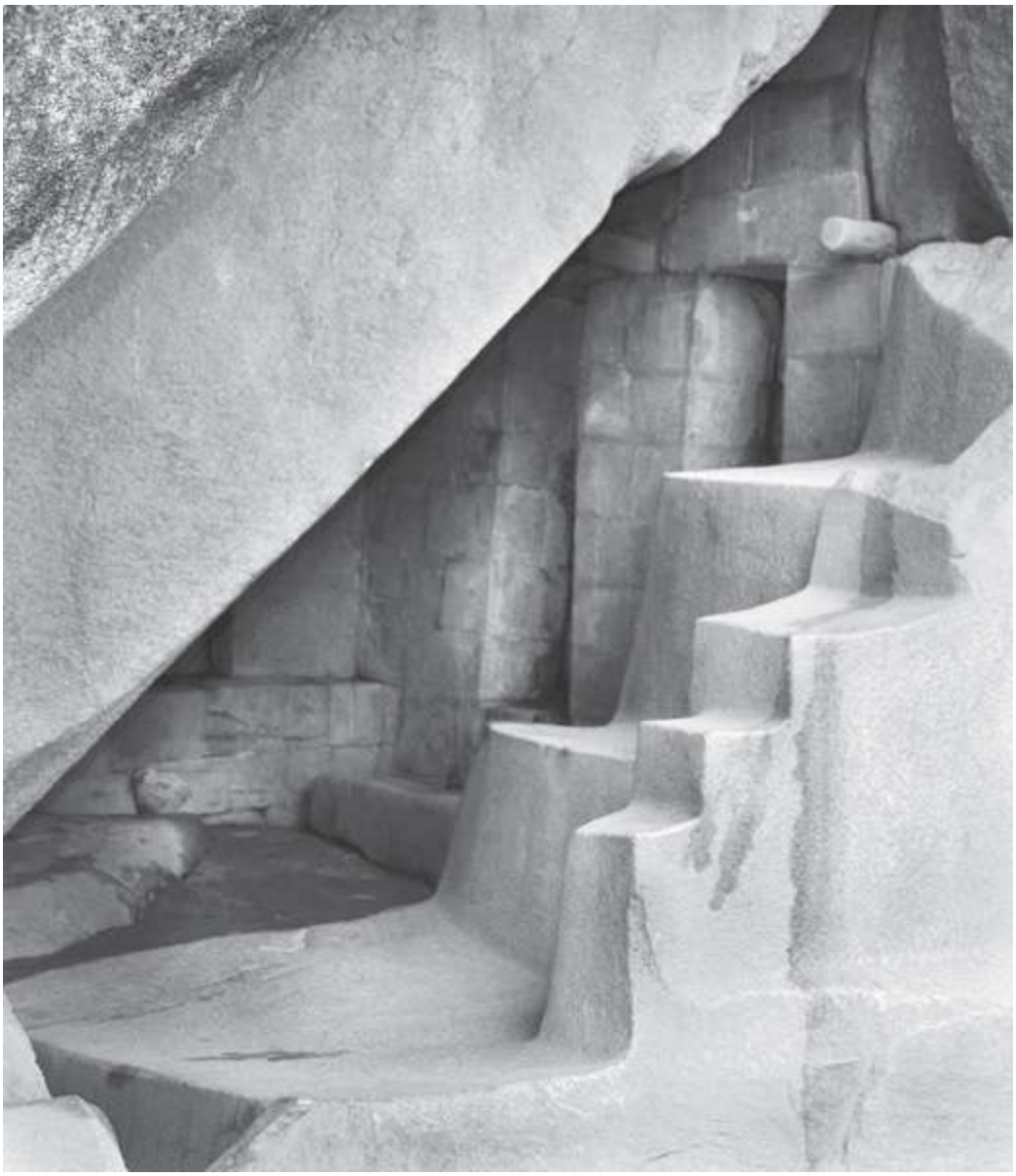
Just as the philosopher Zeno famously illustrated the two doors of Truth and Falsehood to his pupils, so Plato used the symbol of two paths in the conclusion to his *Republic* when he wrote about a return-of-the-soul story of a soldier named Er, who journeys to a place of judgment, a kind of paradise, while the less virtuous travel along a path to the left and downward to meet their fate. The moral of the story is that those who've followed a life of awareness and self-examination will be able to turn their fate to their advantage, they will have a finer degree of control over their future, even the choice of reincarnation. Only this ardent pursuit of wisdom can combat the stupefaction to which all humans are subject. This symbolic imagery of the wisdom-loving soul ascending to higher levels of existence became a central tenet of Platonic, Stoic, and Neo-Pythagorean Mysteries schools.

Plato reminds us that the point of undergoing initiation into the Mysteries is to restore the soul to that state of perfection in which it entered the world, but from whose aim it becomes deflected while in the physical body. Suitably enabled, a person may conduct him- or herself with greater certainty while living. The Orphic schools point out an additional benefit for initiates when they finally reach the moment of physical death. Faced with a forking of the roads to either beatitude or to torment and wearisome rebirth, as it leaves the body the initiated soul already knows which direction to follow; it has an advantage over those who have slumbered through life unaware that they can better navigate the impenetrable darkness of the underworld before reaching the Otherworld and its

paradisiacal vistas.[1] Homer himself reiterated the point when he wrote *Hymn to Demeter:* "Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these Mysteries. But he who is uninitiated and who has no part in them, never has possession of such good things once he is dead." These relatively recent views substantiate the lengths to which ancient Egyptians went to spell out all the *minutiae* outlining the situations and obstacles to be met in the Amdwat, as exemplified by the copious descriptions throughout the chamber of Pharaoh Unas.



To journey into the Otherworld is to discover the self.



Secluded niche illustrating the concept of the Two Doors. Machu Picchu.

The metamorphosis of the soul is allegorically celebrated in the stories of Cupid, the god of love, and his eventual marriage to the goddess of the soul, Psyche. It is essentially the retelling of the path pursued by both Buddha and Osiris. Such characters appear to fall to Earth by the impulse of curiosity for the mortal world; they undergo toils and tribulations but eventually recover their forfeited bliss by reconnecting with the Otherworld while alive and discovering the wisdom inherent in the pursuit of the divine feminine.

The Gnostic gospels describe with blatant obviousness the benefit behind this pursuit. There are two antagonistic forces at work in the physical world: the God of Light, right-action, and love; and the God of Darkness, whose primary aim is to frustrate the attainment of such positive forces by making people "drink of the waters of forgetfulness . . . in order that they might not know from whence they came."[2] Every social system of organized thuggery founded on deception has always promoted the anesthetizing of intelligence and the pursuit of "mind blindness,"[3] to which the Gnostic gospels reply, "Ignorance is the mother of all evil. Ignorance is a slave. Knowledge is freedom."[4] The purpose shared by all esoteric sects was to liberate humans from this ensnarement by initiating them into the cult of knowledge from whence they might know themselves, and the technique was a shamanic journey of living resurrection into the Otherworld. Like Adam and Eve, a little knowledge goes a long way in helping one make decisions between good and evil whose cause and effect echo both in life and in eternity.

The ritual of raising the dead reverberates into our time, recognized as it is in Easter, a religious event marking the pivotal time of death and rebirth of the spiritualized god-man, now characterized in Christianity by a resurrected Jesus. Yet the etymological roots of Easter lie with Isis/Ast/Asterte, who in her Saxon incarnation was Ostara—the Morning Star—and finally the Germanic Eostre. As such she equates with the Egyptian ideal of the reborn soul following the culmination of the ritual of resurrection at dawn.

In his eighth-century work the Venerable Bede laments that during the month dedicated to Eostre, feasts were held in honor of this fertility goddess but by his time the event had been usurped by the church's new agenda. Even so the Egyptian connections remained. The prelude to Easter is Palm Sunday, marking Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem riding a donkey, an event loaded with ritual symbolism, being as it is the representation of a man who's overcome his animal nature—which Jesus/Isa achieves by undergoing a figurative death. His followers marked this deeply symbolic rite of passage by waving palm leaves, a gesture harking back to the resurrection ritual of Osiris, for the symbol used to mark the occasion was the palm tree.

Osiris is depicted with a bluish-green skin; he is the oldest surviving expression of the cult of the Green Man, the tutelary deity of fertility who every year at the spring equinox revitalizes the land and raises it from the dead. Although Jesus is never depicted with green skin, the attentive eye glancing up at the stained glass throughout Chartres Cathedral—a site with long links to Mysteries schools—will notice how, in the southeast window, Jesus has been placed on an uncharacteristic green throne.

What countless initiates discovered during their immersion in the sanctity of the bridal chamber remains the biggest mystery of all, and yet the surviving accounts make one benefit very clear: the reconciliation of opposites and the experience of unity within the individual. This is the key that unlocks the limitless psychic energy within, which in turn amplifies the awareness of the self and one's ability to function consciously as an autonomous being. The Gnostics and the later Hermeticists discovered all too well this potential to reach into a spiritual world beyond form that lies within each person's grasp—the paradise long stymied by orthodox religion.

Cupid and Psyche. The legend is recounted in The Golden Ass *by Lucius Apuleius, in which the hero is put through a series of adventures whereby he overcomes his animal urge, discovers the nature of his soul, and is indoctrinated into the Mysteries of Isis.*

The path to understanding this latent potential was through initiation where the candidate underwent a figurative death and crossed over momentarily into a new threshold. Today, such an event is termed a near-death experience, and latter-day studies of such incidents reveal patients describing the same landscapes, euphoria, meetings, and blissful visions once seen long ago by initiates in their sarcophagi or caves. But more to the point, these people, through an *involuntary* experience, not only gained

mystical revelations, they also discovered something about their purpose in this life, and upon returning to the body proceeded to lead charmed lives, with improved health, greater empathy for others, even greater sensitivity to light and sound. They also consider themselves to be more spiritual after the experience, but not necessarily aligned to organized religion.[5]

Although the journey of this book has dealt with things of ages long gone, its appeal is timely. More and more people are shunning major world religions because their core has been revealed to be hollow or their message hijacked by extremists. At the very least, people are rejecting communal prayer for personal introspection, ironically imitating the very essence of the initiate's solitary search for self-discovery. As humans, we long for spiritual rejuvenation and direct experience of purpose.

The aim of the Knowledge was to assist people transcend their perceived helplessness by taking an active role in their personal conscious manifestation process. Because all forms are interconnected, both in the material and the ethereal, a person armed with an understanding of cosmic processes can actively influence the outcome of forces taking place in both spheres; they can become masters of their own reality rather than being victims of it. By becoming aware of their place in the order of life, a man or woman can instigate changes in the world around them, they can influence circumstance, and far from being passive observers, they can make reality respond to their will.

The successful journey into the Otherworld and the discovery of the self represents the triumph of psychospiritual energy above blind religious dogma. Ultimately the goal and gift of living resurrection is freedom of conscience, precisely as the Gospel of Thomas reminds us: "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world."[6]

FIG. 4.

"They endeavour to entice them to visit their subterranean abodes."

Notes

A SCOTTISH FAERY TALE . . .

1. Mackenzie, "A Vision of the Dead," in *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*.

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A NOBLE TRADITION RECENTLY SUPPRESSED

1. Abt and Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife,* 9.

2. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 52.

3. Ibid., 53.

4. Ibid., 144.

CHAPTER 2.
THE MYTH OF RESURRECTION

1. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 332.

2. Kathir, *Al'-Koran, Al'-Muntakhab,* 4:157–58; Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an*.

3. Bembo, *Letters and Comments on Pope Leo X;* and Paolo, *De Vita Leonis Decimi*. John Bale published the phrase as a satire in *Acta Romanorum Pontificum,* 1574. And yet, far from being a satirical quote, Leo X's phrase was witnessed and recorded by Bembo. The records of Cardinal Caesar Baronius—former Vatican librarian and the church's most outstanding historian—provide information of falsification in Christianity. Concerning Pope Leo's declaration, he wrote, "The Pontiff has been accused of atheism, for he denied God and called Christ, in front of cardinals Pietro Bembo, Jovius and Iacopo Sadoleto and other intimates, 'a fable,' it must be corrected" (*Annales Ecclesiastici,* op. cit., tomes viii and xi). In the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Pecci ed., iii, pp. 312–

14, passim), the church nullified this destructive quote by arguing that what Leo had meant by "profitable" was "gainful," and "fable" was "tradition." Hence it was restated as, "How well Christians have gained from this wonderful tradition of Christ." However, Cardinal Bembo, the pope's secretary for seven years, added that Leo "was known to disbelieve Christianity itself. He advanced contrary to the faith and that in condemning the Gospel, therefore he must be a heretic" (in *Letters*).

4. Phillips, *The Virgin Mary Conspiracy,* 147–48; and LePage, *Mysteries of the Bridechamber,* 25.

5. 1 Corinthians 2:2.

6. LePage, *Mysteries of the Bridechamber,* 23.

7. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 153.

8. Iranaeus, *Against Heresies,* 5.35.2.

9. Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key,* 145–49.

10. Gospel of Philip, 55:15–16.

11. Gospel of Thomas, 17, in Patterson, Robinson, and Bethge, *The Fifth Gospel.*

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2. Stobaeus, *Eclogues,* 119.

3. Cited in Faber, *On the Origin of Pagan Idolatry,* 153.

4. Ibid.

5. Smith, *The Secret Gospel,* 14–17; Welburn, *The Beginnings of Christianity,* 98.

6. Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts,* 186.

7. Greaves, *Lao Tzu and Taoism,* 65.

8. Zand I Wahman Yasht, III, 6–22.

9. Most, *Pegamun Harmala;* Flattery and Schwartz, *Haoma and Harmaline*.

10. Hoshangji, Haug, and West, *The Book of Arda Viraf,* 166.

11. Emboden, *Art and Artefact as Ethnobotanical Tools*.

12. Emboden, "Sacred Narcotic Water Lily of the Nile," 395–407.

13. Valencic, "Has the Mystery of the Eleusinian Mysteries Been Solved?" 325–36.

CHAPTER 4.
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1. Georgius, *Alphabetum Tibetanum,* 202.

2. Hewett and Dutton, *The Pueblo Indian World,* 37–38.

3. Eastman, *The Soul of the Indian*.

4. Clavigero, *The History of Lower California,* 84–86.

5. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California,* 754.

6. Fraser, *The Golden Bough,* 2–11.

7. Phillips, "Magnetic Portals Connect Earth to the Sun."

8. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akitu Festival.*

9. Vermaseren, *Mithras: The Secret God,* 75.

10. Faber, *On the Origin of Pagan Idolatry,* 3:180.

11. Strabo, *Geographica,* book 5, 730.

12. Speidel, *Mithras-Orion: Greek Hero and Roman Army God,* 1.

13. Cooper, *Mithras: Mysteries and Initiation Rediscovered,* x.

14. For example, Marinatos, *The Goddess and the Warrior,* 62.

15. Speidel, *Mithras-Orion: Greek Hero and Roman Army God,* 43.

16. Cooper, *Mithras: Mysteries and Initiation Rediscovered,* 54.

17. For example, Keating, *The History of Ireland,* vol. IV, 466.

18. Hood, "The Tartaria Tablets."

19. Cited in Gardner, *Realm of the Ring Lords,* 30–33, 68–70.

20. Curry, "Gold Artifacts Tell Tale of Drug-Fueled Rituals and 'Bastard Wars.'"

21. John 3:3.

22. Gardner, *Realm of the Ring Lords,* 103–4.

23. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism,* 192.

24. Grant, *The Magical Revival,* 28.

25. Earhart, *A Religious Study of the Mount Haguro Sect of Shugendo*.

26. Evans-Wentz, *Cuchama and Sacred Mountains,* 48.

27. Morrow, *The Sacred Science of Ancient Japan,* 39–40.

28. Ibid.

29. Dresser, *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures,* 112.

30. Mullin, *The Shifting Narratives and Circling Bodhisattvas of Baoguo Si*.

31. Chen, *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo*.

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38. Gardner, *The Magdalene Legacy,* 8–9.

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3. MacDonald, *The New Statistical Account for Scotland,* vol. X.

4. Elder, *Celt, Druid and Culdee,* 1990, 92.

5. Ibid.

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7. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity,* 143.

8. Curtis and Ponting, *New Light on the Stones of Callanish*.

9. Broadhurst, *Tintagel and the Arthurian Mythos,* 158–80; Broadhurst and Miller, *Dance of the Dragon*.

10. Broadhurst and Heath, *The Sacred Land,* 103.

11. Broadhurst, *Tintagel and the Arthurian Mythos,* 158–80.

12. Ibid.

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2. 1 Samuel 14:27.

3. Eneix, “The Ancient Architects of Sound.”

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2. Ibid.

3. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks,* 92.

4. Turner, *Ritual in Gnosticism,* 136–40.

5. Gospel of the Egyptians (2), in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 218.

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13. Themistius, *Aristotle on the Soul*.

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16. Willoughby, *Pagan Regeneration*.

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18. Bleeker, *Initiation in Ancient Egypt,* 35.

19. Willoughby, *Pagan Regeneration*.

20. In Freke, *The Jesus Mysteries*.

21. Strabo, *Geographica,* book 5, 4–5.

22. See Paget, *In the Footsteps of Orpheus*.

23. Baigent, *The Jesus Papers,* 180–88.

CHAPTER 8.
THE SECRET BRIDAL CHAMBER

1. Strabo, *Geographica,* book 5, 730.

2. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass,* 285–86.

3. Turner, *Ritual in Gnosticism,* 136–38.

4. Iranaeus, *Against Heresies,* 1.21.3.

5. Gospel of Thomas, in Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels,* 75.

6. Smith, *The Gospel of Philip,* section 60.

7. Ibid., section 38.

8. Ibid., section 107.

9. Ibid., section 96.

10. Drowner, *The Mandeans of Iran and Iraq,* 100.

11. LePage, *Mysteries of the Bridechamber,* 94.

12. Smith, *The Gospel of Philip,* section 59.

13. Ibid., section 107:14–16.

14. Rudolph, *Gnosis,* 293.

15. Weidner and Bridges, *The Mysteries of the Great Cross of Hendaye,* 88–89.

16. Dunne, *Carl Jung,* 171.

CHAPTER 9.
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE MIDDLE EAST STAYS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

1. Sejourne, *Burning Water,* 190.

2. Miller and Taube, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico,* 190.

3. Bierhorst, *The Mythology of Mexico and Central America,* 161.

4. Miguel Angel Vergara, Mayan teacher, in personal communication with author.

5. Silva, *The Divine Blueprint,* 33–41.

6. Sejourne, *Burning Water,* 56.

7. Ibid., 58.

8. Ibid.

9. Popol Vuh.

10. Stead, *The Review of Reviews,* 12: 275; Le Plongeon, *Sacred Mysteries among the Mayas and the Quiches,* 87.

11. Vare, "El Classico Medio en el Noroccidente de Yucatan."

12. Schiele and Matthews, *The Code of Kings,* 200.

13. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits,* 66.

CHAPTER 10.
GEEZERS OF NAZARETH

1. LePage, *Mysteries of the Bridechamber,* 93; Keller, *The Bible as History*.

2. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*.

3. Revelation 22:16.

4. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Against Heresies,* in Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*.

5. Drowner, *The Mandeans of Iran and Iraq,* 100.

6. Shuré, *The Great Initiates,* 520n.

7. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels;* Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*.

8. In Kathir, *Al'-Koran, Al'-Muntakhab;* Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 345.

9. Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess,* 592.

10. Mark 14:3–11.

11. Stewart, *The Foreigner,* 21–22.

12. Matthew 3:2.

13. Broadhurst and Miller, *Dance of the Dragon;* Graves, *Needles of Stone;* Silva, *The Divine Blueprint*.

14. Silva, *First Templar Nation*.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*.

18. Descriptions of the life of Krishna resembling, even paralleling the later story of Jesus can be found in a myriad of other sources, including the Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatam (or Bhagavatam Purana), Khuddakapatha, Sutta Nipata (in the Khuddaka Nikaya), and Diha Nikaya (in the Sutta Pitaka). Also pertinent is the work of nineteenth-century journalist Nicolas Notovitch, who was given access to holy books in Himis and Lhasa, claimed by the hosting monasteries to have been written some time prior to 500 BC. These source books were verified by Swami Abhedananda and the scientist Nicholas Roerich. There are also analogous folklore tales from central Asia, noted by chroniclers such as Strabo and already ancient by his time. See also

George Cox, *The Mythology of the Aryan Nations;* Kersey Graves, *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviors,* 225.

CHAPTER 11.
INSIDE THE GREAT PYRAMID AND INTO THE OTHERWORLD

1. Brunton, *A Search in Secret Egypt,* 39.

2. Ibid., 41.

3. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Sacred Science,* 111.

4. Silva, *The Divine Blueprint,* 73–83; Knight and Lomas, *Uriel's Machine*.

5. Chouinard, *Lost Race of Giants;* Dewhurst, *The Ancient Giants Who Ruled America*.

6. *Strand Magazine,* December 1895, 646–47; reproduced in Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland,* 1:57.

CHAPTER 12.
EGYPTIAN INITIATION

1. *The Roman History of Ammianus Marcelinius,* 315.

2. Apuleius, *The Works of Apuleius,* 240.

3. Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes,*150–51.

4. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Sacred Science,* 111.

5. Porphyry, *De Abstinentia,* 4.6.

6. DuQuesne, *Anubis,* 26ff.; Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts,* 22.

7. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* text 9.9.

8. Reymond, *The Mythological Origin of the Egyptian Temple;* Abt and Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife*.

9. Abt and Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife,* 144.

10. Ibid, 2.

11. Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key,* 146.

12. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* text 9.10–11.

13. Mead, *Corpus Hermeticum,* 10.25; Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* utterances 256–301, 302–458.

14. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes,* 28.

15. Pawson, *Gematria,* 78; Michell, *The Dimensions of Paradise,* 182.

CHAPTER 13.
HOW TO TRAVEL TO THE OTHERWORLD AND BACK. OR, THE PYRAMID TEXTS

1. Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*.

2. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Sacred Science,* 99.

3. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art,* 109.

4. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* utterances 220–22, 254–57, 260.

5. This is a point made in Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*.

6. Ibid., 166.

7. Hooke, *Myth, Ritual and Kingship,* 74–80.

CHAPTER 14.
PHARAOH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

1. Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts,* 72, 90–95.

2. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt,* 1:213–14.

3. Welburn, *The Beginnings of Christianity,* 254.

4. Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts,* 99–102.

5. Ibid., 101.

6. Ibid., 103–4.

7. Faber, *On the Origin of Pagan Idolatry,* 3:187; Maurice, *The History of Hindostan,* 5:1061.

8. Greaves, *Pyramidographia,* 2:34.

9. Oliver, *The History of Initiation,* 21–23.

10. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,* vol. 52, part I, 165.

11. Maurice and Barlo, *Indian Antiquities,* 386.

12. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* utterance 159.

CHAPTER 15.
GREEN MEN, WHITE KNIGHTS

1. Serbanesco, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Templiers et les Croisades,* 300–7.

2. Silva, *First Templar Nation,* 168–69.

3. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica;* Silva, *First Templar Nation,* 129.

4. Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail,* 374.

5. For example, Thiering, *Jesus: The Man,* 151.

6. Silva, *First Templar Nation,* 179–91.

7. Ibid., 194.

8. Recounted by Scaliburis, "blog.thomar.org, March 7, 2009."

9. Ibid.

10. Silva, *First Templar Nation,* 179–91.

11. Ricardo Branco, "blog.thomar.org/2007/02."

12. Serbanesco, *Histoire de l'Ordre des Templiers et les Croisades,* 302.

13. Cooper, *Mithras: Mysteries and Initiation Rediscovered,* 32.

14. Silva, *First Templar Nation,* 102.

15. Oliver, *The History of Initiation*.

16. Berage, *Les plus secrets mystères des Hants Grades de la Maçonnerie dévoilés,* vi.

17. Corbin, *The Imago Templi in Confrontation;* Waite, *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*.

18. Mackey, *Lexicon of Freemasonry*.

19. Oliver, *The Historical Landmarks and Other Evidences of Freemasonry,* vol. 2, 34.

20. Silva, *The Divine Blueprint,* 33–42.

21. Knight and Lomas, *The Second Messiah,* 148.

22. Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key*.

23. Coppens, *The Stone Puzzle of Rosslyn Chapel*.

24. Ibid.

25. Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key*.

26. Ibid.

27. Wicherink, *Souls of Distortion Awakening*.

CHAPTER 16.
THE SCIENCE OF THE OTHERWORLD

1. Roney-Dougal, *The Faery Faith,* 11.

2. Burr, *Blueprint for Immortality;* Braud and Schlitz, "Consciousness Interactions with Remote Biological Systems," 1–46.

3. Broadhurst and Miller, *Sun and the Serpent;* Silva, *The Divine Blueprint;* Graves, *Needles of Stone*.

4. Reymond, *The Mythological Origin of the Egyptian Temple,* 122, 136.

5. Silva, *The Divine Blueprint,* 82.

6. Phillips, "Magnetic Portals Connect Earth to the Sun."

7. Poynder, *Pie in the Sky,* 81.

8. Burke and Halberg, *Seed of Knowledge, Stone of Plenty,* 129.

9. Brooker, "Magnetism and Standing Stones."

10. Mereaux, *Carnac,* 138–42.

11. Devereux, *Earth Lights Revelation*.

12. Wever, *The Circadian System of Man,* 157.

13. Nelson et al, *FieldREG II: Consciousness Field Effects: Replications and Explorations;* Nelson, *FieldREG Measurements in Egypt: Resonant Consciousness at Sacred Sites,* 425–54.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

CHAPTER 17.
THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE SOUL

1. Plato, *Phaedrus,* 114.

2. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library,* 119.

3. Ibid., 387.

4. Ibid., 159.

5. Sartori, *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences*.

6. Pagels, "Gospel of Thomas," 111.

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